

DISTINCTIVE
PRINCIPLES OF THE
REFORMED
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

BY REV. DAVID SCOTT

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DISTINCTIVE PRINCIPLES

OF THE

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY REV. DAVID SCOTT.

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PREFACE TO 2016 EDITION

This edition is intended to match the original 1841 edition page-by-page and line-by-line. Exceptions are that corrections have been made according to the *errata* on p. viii. Various other typographical and minor errors have also been corrected. In a few cases where the author's intention was not entirely clear, they have been left unchanged. Some Scripture references in the footnotes have been edited to provide a greater consistency of style. Hopefully, no new errors have been introduced but it is difficult to be completely certain in a publication of this size.

An original edition is held by the Library of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA 15208. PDF copies of the original may be obtained from Still Waters Revival Books, <http://puritandownloads.com/>.

Biographical information about the author, David Scott (1794-1871), may be found in William Melancthon Glasgow's *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America*.¹

Information on the original printer, Joel Munsell, is available online.²

¹ W. Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore, MD: Hill & Harvey, 1888), 662-64, <https://archive.org/details/historyofreforme00glas>.

² Christina Duffy, "135th Anniversary of Printer Joel Munsell's Death," *Collection Care* (blog), January 14, 2015, <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/collectioncare/2015/01/135th-anniversary-of-printer-joel-munsells-death.html>.

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ERRATA.

- Page 71.—17th line from the top, for requires read require.
 — 100.— 8th line from the bottom, for uperiority read superiority.
 — 109.—11th line from the bottom, for my read thy.
 — — 10th — — blot out the word—away.
 — 114.—13th — — for glorlous read glorious.
 — 157.— 7th — — for Appollas read Apollos.
 — — 4th — — for Christ's read Christ.
 — 164.— 5th line from the top, before the word evil, add done.
 — 192.— 6th line from the bottom, for case read cause.
 — 255.— 7th line from the top, for publici read public.
 — — 12th line from the top, for impurity read impunity.
 — 263.—for Section V. read Section VI.

INTRODUCTION.

THE SUBJECT STATED.

The design of the following pages is to furnish such a view of the principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as may point out the position which she occupies: and vindicate her distinct organization as a church. The testimony which she has exhibited to the world, embraces the whole of revealed truth. The greatest part of this is held in common with all evangelical professors of religion. The Westminster confession of faith, catechisms, larger and shorter, have been adopted, and made part of her terms of communion. The doctrines which the Reformed Presbyterian Church holds in common with others, it is not designed to discuss; but, such only as give peculiarity to her testimony, and which in the title of this work are called “distinctive principles.” They

are arranged according to the following order, namely: The duty of religious covenanting—The universal dominion of Christ the Mediator—and, The universal application of the scriptures as the rule of duty in all things, *civil as well as religious*.

The title “distinctive principles” is applied to these doctrines, because their acknowledgement is necessary to Christian and ministerial communion: no one can be admitted to the fellowship of the church without an approval of these principles. They are therefore styled “distinctive.” For, it is not assumed, that the *mere belief* of these doctrines is peculiar to the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Were the doctrines in question rejected by all other Christians, it might be considered a strong presumption that she was mistaken in this part of her testimony. The most distinguished commentators, however, and biblical critics, as well as eminent writers of different Christian denominations, teach these doctrines in their expositions of scripture, as shall be shown in the prosecution of this work. But, while they are held by many, as abstract doctrines of divine truth, they are not embodied in the testimony of any other Christian denomination; nor made necessary to ministerial or Christian fellowship. Although *other individuals* may hold these doctrines, it is a “distinctive” feature of

the Reformed Presbyterian Church to embody them in her testimony; and to make them terms of communion. Such as are not familiar with the subject, may suppose that the principle respecting “religious covenanting” ought to have been excepted. The reader is asked to suspend his judgment on this question, till the matter be laid before him in the discussion of the subject; where it shall be shown that while other ecclesiastical bodies have recognised “religious covenanting” as a duty, it has been with such restrictions as warrants the placing of this duty among the distinctive characteristics of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Indeed the name by which her members is more commonly known, points to this, as one of her peculiarities. They are called *Covenanters*.

The name “distinctive” is also with propriety applied to these principles, because the church, by her terms of communion, makes it obligatory upon her members to apply them in their practice. The assent of every person enjoying the fellowship of the church is not only required to these doctrines; but every member is bound to carry them out in practice. They are “distinctive” of the *action* of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as of her theory of doctrine. It is her consistency, in this respect, that has exposed her to the obloquy and scorn of nominal professors, and

ungodly men. The abstract exhibition of truth could have been easily endured; but the concrete existence which the church has given to this, in the lives of her members, excites the most ruthless enmity; and places her in the peculiar position of dwelling alone, unnumbered with the people. This practical application of the testimony of Jesus, forms an important part of the *present duty* of the church: it flows directly from the doctrines maintained, relative to the mediatorial dominion of Christ; and the universal application of scripture.

Prophecy reveals a great anti-Christian apostacy, which was to arise during the New-Testament dispensation; and which for a long period was to fill the professing Christian world with moral darkness. The condition of society during the domination of the anti-Christian corruption, is spoken of in scripture as heathenish. "But the court without the temple leave out, for it is given to the Gentiles, to be trodden under foot forty and two months." History verifies the truth of the prophecy. In connexion with this, the scriptures declare that a testimony for truth should be supported with success by witnesses, provided for that purpose, by the Head of the church. "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophecy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed

in sackcloth.” In accordance with this promise, the Redeemer has supported a few faithful witnesses; and continues still to support them; in bearing testimony against this system of corruption. It is not to be concealed, that many of those who are nominally protestant, are under the influence of anti-Christian principles, and chargeable with anti-Christian practices. And this is true of communities, both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as of individuals. The few faithful witnesses of the Redeemer who, having not shrunk from their duty, in opposing anti-Christianism, doctrinal and practical, whether found in, or out of, the Romish apostacy, have been driven into the wilderness—hated, despised, and not unfrequently persecuted. At the era of the reformation, the covenanted church of Scotland bore a distinguished testimony for all the offices of Christ, as prophet, priest, and king; and for the pure doctrines, worship, discipline and government of the house of God. By the second reformation she advanced in her testimony: and in the persecution which followed, she exemplified the character of a faithful witness; especially on behalf of the royal character and claims of the Mediator. She maintained in doctrine, and adhered in practice to the truth, that Jesus Christ *alone* is Head of the church. For, the denial of this truth, was the prevailing anti-

Christian feature of the period. The distinguishing characteristics of the present age, is hostility to the doctrine of Christ's dominion over the nations; and, the practice consequent upon this, of refusing to apply the scriptures as the universal rule in civil as well as in religious matters. Reformed Presbyterians, carrying forward the testimony of the covenanted church of Scotland, make it to bear particularly upon these anti-Christian and infidel principles and practices. The great object aimed at is to help forward the glorious triumph of the Messiah, so beautifully described in the seventy-second psalm. When "all kings shall fall down before him; and all nations shall serve him."

To prevent any undue expectation, on the part of the reader, let him bear in mind, that the subjects discussed in the following pages are chiefly considered in their bearings on the distinctive principles of the church. I refer particularly to the dominion of Christ, and the application of scripture to things civil as well as religious, which are the subjects of the second and third chapters. These are illustrated at considerable length, in so far as they bear on the peculiarity of the church's testimony, while a brief statement only is given of their more general views.

CHAPTER I.

SOCIAL COVENANTING.

SECTION I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

I. A religious covenant is nearly of the same import with a vow. In the language of scripture the terms covenant and vow are sometimes used in relation to the same thing; and expressive of the same religious act. A vow is a promise of obedience to God; the person binding himself by a solemn promise or oath to perform certain specified moral duties, or to abstain from sin. So far, the act is a vow. This, is included in a covenant, with the additional consideration that the covenanter swears adherence to God's covenant of mercy. "Taking hold of my covenant" saith the Lord.* Salvation is secured to all the promised seed, in the covenant of redemption; on the condition, of the obedience of the Son of God in our nature, "unto death, even the death of the cross." "If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed, which shall prolong their

* Is. lvi. 6.

days and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.”* “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”† The intelligent and believing covenanter cordially assents to this covenant promise of God; approves of this way, of being saved from all iniquity. Hence he is said to take hold of God’s covenant. This religious act, is in one view of it, a vow; in another it is a covenant; therefore in relation to it, these terms are used as synonymous. The covenanter promises obedience to the Divine law; accepting it as the rule of his actions. He promises obedience to the law, not that he may be accepted of God, because of his obedience; but, as a reasonable expression of the duty which he owes to God, for the manifestation of whose glory he ought to do all things. He knows that, the righteousness of Christ, is the only ground of a sinner’s acceptance with Jehovah; but, he knows too, that being delivered from the law, he should serve God “in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter,” he therefore solemnly promises obedience. The covenanter, swearing in faith assents to the terms of the covenant of redemption, made between God the Father, and God the Son, in eternity. The terms are—the obedience of the Son in our nature, and as the substitute, of those embraced in the covenant—and the acceptance of this, by the Father, as the meritorious cause of their justification. Assenting to these, the covenanter takes hold

* Is. liii. 10, Lowth’s translation. † Ps. lxxxix. 34-36.

of God's covenant; and renews with all the solemnity of an oath, his allegiance to the God of heaven; covenanting, to be the Lord's, and to walk worthy of his Christian vocation. "That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."*

In religious covenants, the parties bind themselves not only to God; but, sometimes also, to one another. Of this, the following is an example: "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king, and the people that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people."† The British covenanters of the seventeenth century similarly bound themselves by the solemn league and covenant. "We shall also according to our places and callings, in this common cause of religion, liberty and peace of the kingdoms, assist and defend all those that enter into this league and covenant, in the maintaining and pursuing thereof; and shall not suffer ourselves, directly or indirectly, by whatsoever combination, persuasion or terror, to be divided and withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifference or neutrality in this cause, which so much concerneth the glory of God, the good of the kingdom, and honor of the king."‡

* Deut. xxix. 12, 13.

† 2 Kings xi. 17.

‡ Article VI.

Covenanting is both personal and social. Personal covenanting is the act of an individual, vowing obedience to the Divine commands, and giving his acquiescence to the way of salvation, by the perfect obedience of the Redeemer. Every one actually believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is in point of fact a covenanter: whether he *formally* enters into covenant, or not, he does so *substantially*; in his confessions of sin and promises of obedience, made in dependance on Divine grace, he truly vows and covenants with God. But, this does not supersede the duty, of formally vowing unto God. The example of the saints recorded in scripture warrants the duty of formal personal covenanting. “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying if God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God.”* “I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.”†

The scriptures contain many examples of social covenanting, both ecclesiastical and national. “And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord,—and all the people stood to the covenant.”‡ “And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers,—and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart.”§

II. The divine law binds all mankind to obedience, in all their moral actings. Every rational creature is

* Gen. xxviii. 20, 21. † Ps. cxix. 106.

‡ 2 Kings xxiii. 3. § 2 Chron. xv. 12, 15.

under obligation to obey the law of God. The obligation is constituted by the relation of creature. The Creator possesses the right of dominion over his creatures: and they owe to him, the duty of obedience. Obligation to obey the divine law is entire; every moral action that can be performed is required by the law; nothing can be added to the demands which it makes upon its subjects. Works of supererogation are impossible. No, not even holy angels, nor the spirits of just men made perfect, can attain the performance of works not required by the law of God under which as creatures they exist. The obligation to obey the law is perpetual in its duration, as well as universal in its extent. Every act of obedience which the rational creature can give is nothing more than he was bound to, by the law of his moral nature: the obligation continues, and shall continue coeval with the existence of the creature. No addition, then, can ever be made to the divine law, because it necessarily binds to the performance of every possible duty.

III. The requirements of the divine law form the matter of scriptural covenanting. By divine law, I mean not only the summary of moral duty contained in the decalogue; but, all that by which God makes known to us the obligations which we owe to Him: and expressed in scripture by a variety of names; such, as the law, testimonies, statutes, precepts and commandments. These are the matter of covenanting; or that to which Christians bind themselves when they enter into covenant with God. An individual, a church, or a nation may not bind themselves to do any thing which is at

variance with the revealed will of God: indeed no moral obligation can be constituted, to do that which is inconsistent with the divine will. Men may swear to do sinful things; but such oaths constitute no moral obligation: yet the person swearing in the case supposed, would be guilty of the sin of perjury by swearing to do, what he *ought not* to do. But, not even the awful consideration of an oath can constitute an obligation to do any thing that is morally wrong. The history of the apostle Paul furnishes an example of persons swearing, to do an unlawful act. "Certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they have killed Paul."* These men banded together, swore that they would kill the apostle; but this created no obligation to do so vile a deed; they acted a criminal and sinful part by entering into such an agreement; but they would have been far more criminal and guilty had they carried out the object of their oath. They sinned; but the sin consisted in an engagement to do what was unlawful; and not in leaving unperformed the object of their oath. Men may not, cannot, bind themselves to do any thing unlawful; for were this possible their voluntary actings would be paramount to the divine law; and entirely set aside the authority of God.

The matter of a covenant should not include any thing impossible. Whatever might be the desire of the party entering into covenant engagements it would be morally wrong for him, to bind his soul by an oath to

* Acts xxiii. 12.

do what was impossible and beyond his reach. To this charge covenanters do not stand exposed by making the law of God the matter of covenant engagement. True “no mere man, since the fall, is able in this life to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.”* But, Christians in perfect consistency with this may bind themselves by covenant to take the law of God as the rule of life: and to aim at conformity with its requisitions, in every part of their conduct. While Christians feel their own weakness, and incompetency, they rely on the promised aid of Christ to enable them to discharge all required duties. “My grace shall be sufficient for thee.” And, in the experience of this promise being fulfilled, they can say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”†

Further, a covenant should not include any thing that is in itself indifferent. Acts which may be done, or left undone at the choice of the agent are not in their own nature moral; form no part of the duty of Christians; and should not therefore form part of a religious covenant. The duties required of us, by the law of God alone, should form the matter of covenanting. God prescribes his law, as the rule of obedience; and by this only, should Christians be directed in the acknowledgement of their duty by covenant engagement.

It is to believers the source of unspeakable gratitude to God, that they are delivered from the law as the means of being justified; for were they to be tried on

* Shorter Catechism, answer to the 82d question.

† Phil. iv. 13.

the ground of personal obedience, they must be condemned. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight."* From the calamity of sin believers are delivered by the righteousness of Christ. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."† Yet they are not delivered from the obligations of the law as a rule of life; they are under law to Christ. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."‡ "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."§ To this Christians give their approval when they covenant to perform all required duties, receiving the law of God administered to them by Christ as their rule of duty in all things.

IV. In covenanting the vow is the formal ground of obligation.

A vow or covenant does not abrogate the previous obligation of the divine law; nor can it make that to be a duty which was not a duty before the vow or covenant was made. Christians may, however, give their voluntary assent to the obligation of the law by vowing to obey it: and so far as it is a vow, the formal obligation is derived from the act of vowing. Otherwise, the law, and the act of covenanting, would be identical; but,

* Rom. iii. 19, 20.

† Rom. iii. 21.

‡ Rom. vii. 4.

§ John xv. 14.

this is not so in fact; for the law is the will of God, and the covenant is the Christian's voluntary assent to the obligation laid upon him by the law. The law has in itself an intrinsic authority, because it is the will of God; but a covenant is a voluntary admission on the part of the covenanter, of the law's intrinsic authority.

Various reasons may be given why Christians should covenant to do, what they are previously bound to do, by the law. First, they are professed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is therefore proper that they should voluntarily recognize the obligations of duty imposed upon them by this relation; as well, as by the fact, of their being moral agents. All men are bound to obey the law of God; but, all do not obey; nor even acknowledge the authority of the law. It is on this account, a reasonable and becoming service for Christians, publicly to avow their determination by a solemn covenant to serve God "sincerely, really and constantly." In the second place, though covenanting does not create any new duty it superadds a covenant obligation. Thus, Christians by entering into covenant with God have impressed upon their minds more deeply the importance of obedience. In the third place, a covenant obligation to duty, may stimulate to greater diligence in performing it. The authority of God is the primary motive to all acceptable obedience, yet other motives coinciding with this are admissible. Of this kind is covenanting; it excites to the performance of duty. Lastly, a voluntary covenant engagement, by which divine obligations are recognized increases in the mind of the covenanter a sense of responsibility, and as this

sense of responsibility is felt, it will be followed by a corresponding diligence and activity in the way of duty.

V. Christians should covenant in dependence upon divine grace. Religious covenanting is based on the covenant of redemption; and has a view to the blessings promised in that transaction, through Christ, to all his seed. It is in Christ that they are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," and it is from strength derived from him through the medium of these, that they are able to perform any duty. "For" said the Savior to his disciples "without me ye can do nothing."

SECTION II.

PROOF OF SOCIAL COVENANTING.

The duty of personal covenanting has it is presumed never been denied by any Christian, and may not be denied by any one who deliberately examines the scriptures. "I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments,"* is the approved example of a saint, put on record for our instruction and imitation. A duty which that saint was taught by the Spirit of God. "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God."† As vowing in relation to ceremonial duties was wholly voluntary, that spoken of in the scripture now quoted must be moral, because, it is the subject of a direct and positive precept—"vow and pay unto the Lord your God." It is not considered necessary to offer further proof that personal covenanting is a duty in New Testament times, because it is not disputed by any whose opinions entitle them to respect on this subject. The reader of these pages is requested to bear in mind, in connection with the arguments that shall be adduced for social covenanting, that personal covenanting is admitted to be a duty in New Testament times, by many of those, who deny the obligation of the former. It is an important concession; one, that should be carefully weighed in determining the question at issue. Personal, includes the principle of social covenanting; if the former is moral and obligatory under the New Testament dispen-

* Ps. cxix. 106. † Ps. lxxvi. 11.

sation, so is the latter; any objection to the principle in the one case stands equally strong against the other. No reason can be given, why Christians may personally enter into covenant with God; engaging to perform duty and abstain from sin; and yet, a church or nation may not do the same. There is no impropriety—no incompatibility with the gospel dispensation for a community to engage socially in covenant; to do the same duties, which each individual may personally covenant to perform. That which is lawful in itself, and which any one may lawfully seek to obtain, may be sought by the united effort of many; and the many, may bind themselves by covenant to God, and to one another to seek it, by all lawful means, and, as Christians generally admit the duty of personal covenanting; so social covenanting is entitled to all the advantage of the principle on which this concession is made. As, “iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”* A church or nation entering into covenant to perform duties, obligatory upon every individual of the community, encourage and strengthen one another to fulfil their vows; even as “iron sharpeneth iron.” It is the voice of reason sustained by the word of God, that “two are better than one.”† Social covenanting, is only an application of the principle, included in this inspired aphorism in relation to the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom. “A three-fold cord is not quickly broken.”‡

The testimony of the church requires “an acknowledgement that public covenanting is an ordinance of

* Pro. xxvii. 17. † Eccles. iv. 9. ‡ Eccles. iv. 12.

God, to be observed by churches and nations under the New Testament dispensation—and that these vows, namely, that which was entered into by the church and kingdom of Scotland, called the national covenant, and which was afterwards entered into by the three kingdoms, Scotland, England, and Ireland, and by the reformed churches in these kingdoms usually called the solemn league and covenant, were entered into, in the true spirit of that institution.”*

I. The duty of social covenanting is authorized by the command of God.

This decisive authority is distinctly promulged in various parts of scripture; of which, the following are adduced in proof: “Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to Him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”† “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel, in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.”‡ “And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget, neither shall ye fear other Gods.”§ “And thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”|| The duty of social covenanting is evidently enjoined in these and other passages of scripture; so evident indeed that the keenest writers against it have not undertaken to deny it; but they deny the obligation of the duty under the New Testament dispensation. The ground

* Terms of Communion.

† Deut. x. 20.

‡ Deut. xxix. 1.

§ 2 Kings xvii. 38.

|| Jer. iv. 2.

on which this denial is made, is, that it was a positive institution, and therefore not obligatory upon Christians. This stands, however, as an unsupported assumption; and as no proof is offered, I am not prepared to concede that it was a mere positive institution. And were it admitted that social covenanting was only a positive institution, this would not affect the obligation of the duty; it might, though of merely positive appointment, be permanent in its obligation. A duty commanded by God is permanently binding, unless it is abrogated by the same authority; and until that abrogation takes place it continues in force as a command. "We think it will be allowed that it requires the authority of God to set aside that which he hath once established, that no reasoning regarding the fitness of things, and no conclusions we may be able to deduce from our feeble conceptions of the propriety or impropriety of any particular ordinance, are sufficient to disprove its validity; but if we wish to set aside any ordinance which has once been instituted of God, we must produce his explicit authority for it. The only evidence admissable in such a case as this, is the evidence of scripture; nor are we called upon to shew that an institution of God continues in force, for the conclusion is inevitable, that if no evidence can be adduced of its abolition, it is still binding."*

Those who controvert the obligation of social covenanting have not ventured to class it with ceremonial appointments; which from their anxiety to dispense with the duty, they would have readily done; if done, it

* Presbyterian Review, vol. iii. pp. 10, 11.

could have been with a show of truth. It is not typical in its nature; it forms no part of the law of ceremonies peculiar to the Old Testament church, and could not therefore have been done away, by the abrogation of that system, for the obvious reason that it formed no part of it, and therefore could not be affected by its abrogation. The ground of opposition assumed against social covenanting, that it is a positive appointment, does not invalidate the obligation; at most, were it admitted, it could only prove that God *might* revoke the institution, not that he *would* do it; and far less that he *has* done it. The point at issue may now be easily determined, even on the ground which has been taken by the opponents of social covenanting. A positive institution continues in force till it is repealed; and were social covenanting merely of positive appointment, it must, notwithstanding, be obligatory till such repeal is effected, which can only be done by the same authority that appointed it. But, when was social covenanting repealed; and where is that repeal recorded? It rests with those who are opposed to the duty to answer these questions satisfactorily; on them falls the burden of proof; and till this proof be furnished, covenanters have a right to plead the command of God for the obligation of social covenanting. In obtaining this conclusion I have viewed the subject only in the light in which it has been placed by those who deny the obligation; but the argument derived from the command of God becomes still more complete, when the nature of the command is taken into view. That social covenanting is only a positive institution has not been yielded. The

assumption has been admitted, only, for the sake of pursuing the argument—to show that though the assumption were true, the conclusion is incorrect. The argument increases in strength when placed on the ground of absolute morality. The command of God in regard to the duty of social covenanting is the expression of an obligation arising from the moral relation of the parties. Man is bound by the law of his moral nature to serve God; and covenanting is only one of the ways by which societies intimate this homage of service to him. The moral relation of the parties respectively, gives the one a right to receive the expression of homage, and binds the other to the duty of giving it. The obligation, then, does not flow from mere positive appointment, but from the unalterable moral relations which God and man sustain to each other respectively. The obligation arises not simply from the command; but also from the *nature* of the command. The command of God simply considered would have constituted social covenanting a moral positive duty, because the command is an expression of the divine will; and as such, must have been obligatory, until abrogated by a subsequent expression of the same will. But, when the command is not only an expression of the divine will, but the divine will expressing an obligation flowing from moral relations, then it is a moral-natural obligation which is incapable of being abrogated—an obligation naturally and necessarily permanent. This I hold to be the case with the duty of social covenanting. When God commanded the children of Israel to enter into covenant with him, and thus “swear by his name,” he made known to them an obli-

gation flowing from relations to him which men in New Testament times have in common with those of a former dispensation. The former stand to God in the same relation as did the latter; and are therefore under a similar obligation to acknowledge the relation by entering into covenant with God.

On this point, I only notice further, that an oath being pledged to the performance of things commanded by divine authority, it brings the party covenanting under a voluntary obligation to perform duty. A religious covenant, like other covenants, is in its own nature moral; it differs, indeed, as to its matter, and in the person to whom it is made, but like them it possesses the attribute of moral character. And this character it possesses whether it may be the act of one man, or of a million of men united together in one bond; the addition of number does not change the nature of the act, but imparts to it an increased solemnity.

II. By the approved examples of the people of God. The history of the saints, recorded in scripture, furnishes a number of examples of social covenanting. These are entitled to the respect and imitation of the people of God in all ages. "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."* "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."† Illustrations of duty embodied in the practice of the saints, and recorded with approbation in the sacred writings, are designed as patterns of obedience in

* Heb. vi. 12.

† Song of Solomon i. 8.

all similar circumstances. For, says the apostle, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* I direct the attention of the reader to some approved examples of social covenanting.

1. "Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."† This passage of scripture relates an example of social covenanting, which was entered into most obviously with the approbation of God; and in obedience to his command. This is proved in the first place by the manner in which the whole transaction is related. In the second place, this covenant was entered into under the immediate direction of Moses, the servant of God, And finally, the command and approbation of God, are embraced in the remarkable words by which the transaction is prefaced, "keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do."‡

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

† Deut. xxix. 10—13.

‡ Ibid. xxix. 9.

2. "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul."* This example of covenanting took place during the reign of Asa, one of the reforming kings of Judah; of whom the inspired historian gives this commendation: "Nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days." The divine approval of this covenant transaction is thus expressed: "And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them; and the Lord gave them rest round about."†

3. "And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord's people; between the king also and the people."‡ "And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant, that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant."§ "And because of all this, we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it. They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God; and to observe all the commandments of the Lord our God, and his judgments and his statutes."|| These three examples of covenanting, like that imme-

* 2 Chron. xv. 12.

† 2 Chron. xv. 15.

‡ 2 Kings xi. 17.

§ 2 Kings xxiii. 3.

|| Neh. ix. 38 and x. 29.

diately preceding them, were transacted in remarkably reforming times; and that too, under the superintendence respectively, of such pious and exemplary rulers as Jehoiada, Josiah and Nehemiah. They were resorted to, as means of reformation; and their history is given in scripture with evident commendation.

A number of other examples might be added, but these are sufficient to establish the important principle, that the approved footsteps of the flock exemplify the duty of social covenanting.

4. These examples prove the obligation of national as well as ecclesiastical covenanting. They establish the fact, that the Israelites, as a civil community, entered into covenant with God. The example contained in the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, is most evidently a national transaction, as the reader will perceive by examining the passage. The parties specified as entering into covenant put this beyond a doubt; they are spoken of as standing before God in their civil relations. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water." It would be difficult to express an act of national covenanting in terms more explicit than those here employed.

The other examples which I have adduced in proof of social covenanting, exemplify this duty both nationally and ecclesiastically. That the children of Israel, in their civil character as a nation, entered into covenant with God, covenanting to serve him; and that, as a

church, they entered into covenant with God, covenanting to serve him. In one of these transactions, Josiah, the chief magistrate of the state presided and administered the oath. "And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, and all the people stood to the covenant."* If the covenant had been purely ecclesiastical, a civil ruler would not thus have administered the oath, and presided throughout the solemnity. In another of these transactions, after the covenant is made, it is sealed by the chief men or representatives of the people; among these are found the "princes." "And our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it."† This demonstrates that the people of Israel entered into covenant as a civil community, as well as a church; had it been as a church, and in no other character, the princes, as such, would not have sealed the covenant. The Levites and priests seal the covenant as the representatives of the church, and the princes as the representatives of the commonwealth.

These scripture examples determine the question of social covenanting in the affirmative. For, if the Jews, as a church and a nation, with divine approbation, covenanted to the performance of religious duties, common to the people of God in every age, then churches and nations under the New Testament dispensation may enter into covenant relation with God.

III. The matter embraced in social covenanting proves the morality of the duty, and its continued obligation in New Testament times.

1. The matter of covenanting consists of the various

* 2 Kings xxiii. 3.

† Neh. ix. 38.

duties which covenanters swear to perform when they enter into covenant with God. The knowledge of these, is obtained through the medium of divine revelation. Scripture examples illustrate this; the matter of covenant obligation in such instances is universally the known will of God. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. And all the people answered together, and said, all that the Lord hath spoken, we will do."*

2. The people of God, under the ancient economy, whether considered as a church or a civil commonwealth, were bound by divine authority to perform duties which were *peculiar* to that state of things. And these, of course, were included in their ecclesiastical and national covenants; because such were a part of the revealed will of God. But, while with the abrogation of the Jewish economy these peculiarities were also abrogated, those duties which were not peculiar, but common to the present as well as the past dispensation of the church remain with unabated force. These duties, however, which are common to every dispensation, and of universal obligation, form the prominent matter of social covenanting. These are specified and enumerated, and brought before the view of the covenanters, directly, as the matter covenanted to be performed. On the other hand, such duties as were peculiar to the Jewish dispensation are not directly brought forward as the matter of covenant engagement—they are only inferential-

* Exod. xix. 5, 8.

ly included. Such peculiarities were contingent to a particular dispensation; but not essential to social covenanting. The proper matter of covenanting, common to every dispensation, are moral duties, and these are of universal obligation.

3. An acknowledgement of the true God as our God. “That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”* “And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord, and the king, and the people, that they should be the Lord’s people.”† In the cases now cited the covenanters engage to take Jehovah as their God; and to reject all false gods, as is evident from the context: “But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish.”‡ “And all the people of the land went unto the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly.”§ In like manner when a church or a nation enters into covenant with God under the Christian dispensation, they avouch Jehovah to be their God and they reject all false gods. They renounce the idols and “lying vanities” in which the depraved heart of man is disposed to trust.

* Deut. xxix. 12, 13. † 2 Kings xi. 17.

‡ Deut. xxx. 17, 18. § 2 Kings xi. 18.

4. The worship of the true God is avowed, and forms matter of covenanting. "And all the people said unto Joshua, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day."* "And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers."† It is the duty of every rational creature to worship and serve the true God; this is therefore one of the things expressed in the examples of covenanting referred to in the scriptures just quoted.

5. An engagement to take the moral law as the universal rule of action, is matter of social covenanting. The moral law is the rule of human obedience, and, being made the matter of covenant obligation, gives to the covenant a moral character. The first case of social covenanting related in scripture is that at mount Horeb, in the wilderness of Sinai, immediately after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. In this transaction the moral law is distinctly announced, as the matter of the covenant into which they entered with God.

When this was republished, it was not as a renovation of the covenant of works; nor was it as a remedial law, by giving a sincere, though imperfect obedience to which, the people of Israel were to be justified. The whole transaction was in subserviency to the covenant of redemption. In the first place, it is subservient to this purpose, as a "school-master, to bring us to Christ," which it does by showing the desert of sin; "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." By giving "the

* Josh. xxiv. 24, 25. † 2 Chron. xv, 12.

knowledge of sin," for "I had not known sin, but by the law," says the apostle. "For I had not known lust except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." In the second place, the law is given as a rule of life. It shows to the people of God their duty. That, though they are in a new covenant relation with God, they are not freed from the obligation to obey his law; they are under law to Christ, that they "should be holy and without blame before him in love." The moral law is the rule of the believer's conduct, and for this purpose it was republished at Sinai, and sworn to, by the whole congregation. By this voluntary deed, they covenanted to take the law as administered by Christ, as the universal rule of their conduct.

The covenant is stated to the people. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice and keep my covenant," and the people gave their assent, saying: "all that the Lord hath spoken will we do." The matter of the covenant is specified, namely, the ten commandments; the precepts of the moral law, then, are the duties which the children of Israel engaged to perform, in the covenant made at Sinai.* In the recapitulation of the history, Moses re-states the transaction in precisely the same form; repeating the ten commandments as the matter of covenant obligation.† In other covenant transactions the precepts of the moral law are the duties to which the covenanters bind themselves. "And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes.—

* Exod. xix. 5, 8; and xx. 1-17.

† Deut. v. 1-21.

They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses, the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our God, and his judgments and his statutes."*

This view of the subject is further strengthened by referring to the punishments threatened against covenant breaking; and the promises made for covenant keeping. These demonstrate the morality of the transactions. "When ye have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other Gods, and bowed yourselves to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given you."† "And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbor, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? Then they shall answer, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other Gods and served them."‡ "Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee, the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers."§ In these instances, idolatry is the sin by which covenant obligation is violated; and the mercy of God is the promise with which covenant keeping is rewarded, both of which establish the morality of social covenanting; because they establish the fact, that the matter of covenanting is the moral law.

* 2 Kings xxiii. 3; and Neh. x. 29.

† Josh. xxiii. 16.

‡ Jer. xxii. 8, 9.

§ Deut. vii. 12.

IV. The duty of social covenanting is recognised in prophecies which refer to New Testament times.

A great part of prophecy is intended to illustrate the condition of the church and the world, under the gospel dispensation. It shows what glorious things God will perform in behalf of Zion: it describes the character, and frequently points out the duties of her citizens. Prophecy is often an anticipated history of what the people of God *would be*, and what they *would do*, under the blissful and universal influence of the gospel. Among these, social covenanting finds a place. It is foretold in prophecy by the spirit of God, that this duty should be performed in subsequent and better times. Such a prophecy, I maintain, constitutes a moral obligation, and is of equal authority with a command. The obligation, however, let it be borne in mind, does not arise simply from the fact that it is foretold. Many things are subjects of prophecy which are opposed to the will of God. The argument in favor of social covenanting which is derived from prophecy is satisfactory, not because it is foretold that men would covenant. Prophecy tells beforehand that men would commit sin; but sin does not therefore become a duty. Prophecy in such cases is a prospective history of the actions of wicked men; but it furnishes no vindication of these actions: it tells us indeed that they would be, but it leaves them as they are, branded with the mark of divine disapprobation. The argument from prophecy is satisfactory, because it foretells that social covenanting would be used as a means of reforming the church of God and the nations of the

earth. Because it is obviously spoken of with divine approbation: because it is represented as an attainment: and, finally, because it is spoken of as a blessing.

1. Having explained how prophecy may be used as an argument for social covenanting, I now proceed to the proof of the proposition, that it is the subject of prophecies which refer to New Testament times. The spirit of God, speaking by Isaiah, says, "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts."* A talented writer, who has signalised himself by his enmity to covenanting, denies that this prophecy refers to New Testament times—a position in which he will be sustained by all, I presume, who like himself, are hostile to the duty, as the only possible means of invalidating the argument. That the prophecy, however, refers to the gospel era, is evident from the context: no state of things preceding this period could justify such application of the passage. Nay, more, it is evident that the period spoken of is *yet future*: for the prophet goes on to say, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." This has not yet been realized: it remains as a part of the future glory of the church, when the sons of Abraham shall acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah; when the followers of Mahomet shall have submitted to Christianity. Then, when the cross has tri-

* Is. xix. 18.

umphed over the prejudices of Jews, and the infidelity of Mahometans, “shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land.” And then, too, shall five cities in the land of Egypt “swear to the Lord of Hosts.” “I apprehend that the grand accomplishment of these verses, and perhaps of other parts of this extraordinary prophecy is still to be expected; for, though Christianity flourished much in these regions for some time, yet nothing hitherto seems to have occurred fully adequate to the expressions here employed.”* In this judgment every reader will acquiesce whose mind is not biassed by a preconceived opinion, which demands the sacrifice of truth. The context determines the time to which the prophecy refers, it is that of the gospel; and, of this time it is predicated, five cities in the land of Egypt shall “swear to the Lord of Hosts.” The most respectable commentators explain this of social covenanting: “They shall swear to the Lord of Hosts; not only swear by him, giving him the honor of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped, but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honor, and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and to worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their king, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.”†

2. The spirit of God, again speaking by Isaiah, says: “One shall say I am the Lord’s, and another shall call himself by the name Jacob, and another shall subscribe

* Scott on the place.

† Henry on the place.

with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Jacob.”* Whatever allusion there may be in this part of prophecy to the deliverance of the Jews, which was shortly afterwards realized by the edict of Cyrus, the allusion can only be of secondary consideration; the ultimate fulfilment of the promise includes a blessing of infinitely more importance than the deliverance of the Jewish people from the Babylonish captivity; it includes the deliverance of the world from the dominion of Satan, through the knowledge of Christ and him crucified. The return of the Jews from Babylon was in some respects a type of this great work, and is therefore frequently introduced into the prophecy. Of this, every reader may satisfy himself by examining the context, particularly the forty-second and forty-ninth chapters. The extraordinary out-pouring of the Spirit of God which is promised in the preceding part of the chapter, and of which the remarkable things predicated in the fifth verse are the effects, removes all doubt as to the period of the church to which it refers. It is the gospel dispensation, for in respect of this the promise is, “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.”† Were other evidence than that which is furnished by the context necessary to prove the correctness of the application which I have made of the quotation, to New Testament times, it will be found in the opinion of the most eminent critics. Michaelis in his notes on the passage applies it to the gospel period of the church. Dr. Lowth says: “The character and office of the Messiah was exhibited in general terms at the beginning of chapter

* Is. xliv. 5.

† Joel ii. 28.

forty-second, but here he is introduced in person, declaring the full extent of his commission, which is not only to restore the Israelites, and reconcile them to their Lord and Father, from whom they had so often revolted, but to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, to call them to the knowledge and obedience of the true God, and to bring them to be one church together with the Israelites, and to partake with them of the same common salvation procured for all by the great Redeemer and Reconciler of man to God.”*

The thing foretold, and which I have adduced in proof of social covenanting being the subject of prophecy, which refers to New Testament times, has been differently explained by some of the ancient commentators, and in this they have been followed by some of the moderns. “And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord;” signifies, according to their exposition, “shall write upon his hand, I belong to God;” and in illustration of this view they refer to the practice of idolaters marking themselves with the name or ensign of their idols, and slaves being marked with the name of their masters. This exposition is liable to a most serious objection. It is utterly improbable that the extraordinary influence of the Spirit should be followed by the subjects of it imitating the example of idolaters and slaveholders; and it is impossible that the Holy Spirit should speak of such a practice in terms of commendation as he here does. That this practice was adopted by some of the votaries of the Roman apostacy, is irrelevant and can be of no weight in the determination of

* Lowth’s Notes on Is. xlix. 1.

the question. The translation in common use "shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord," includes the idea of covenanting; the covenanters at the same time subscribing a written form of the covenant deed. An example of this is recorded in the book of Nehemiah, "we make a sure covenant, and write it and seal it"* This exposition is not only more consistent with Christian propriety of conduct, it is entitled also to preference on the score of grammatical accuracy. For, were this not the meaning intended, the word "hand" would have been governed by a preposition expressive of action upon it. In other cases, when such action is intended, (the same verb being used) it is followed by a preposition governing the substantive upon which the action takes place. For example, "I will write *on* the tables," and, "Thou shalt write *upon* the stones all the words of this law."† The absence of the preposition throws the weight of evidence to an overwhelming degree on the side of the ordinary translation; "Shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." The action foretold is effected *by* the hand and not *on* it, which is a decisive proof that in New Testament times God's people, with his approbation, would enter into solemn covenant with him. This view of the text is corroborated by the expositions of the best commentators. "Shall give his hand and seal to serve the Lord," says the learned Gill. They shall do this very solemnly, says Henry; "Some of them shall subscribe with their hands unto the Lord, as for the confirming of a bargain a man sets his hand to it and delivers it as his act

* Chap. ix. 38. † Deut. x. 2; and xxvii. 8.

and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better.”

3. The only other text I quote, to prove that social covenanting is the subject of prophecies which refer to the New Testament dispensation, is from the prophecy of Jeremiah; “They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.”* “The duty here spoken of is so distinctly stated that diversity of opinion cannot reasonably be entertained. The Spirit of God foretells that in a future period social covenanting would be resorted to as a means of reformation, by the people of God; and is spoken of with approbation. “Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.” The argument from this text will be conclusive if the period to which it refers can be identified with the Christian dispensation. That the prophecy had an earlier, though only partial fulfilment, is not questioned; this was accomplished in the return of the Jews from Babylon; but this does not exhaust the entire meaning of it, nor is it the principal thing in the prophecy. The enlargement of the church of God, by the nations of the earth, turning from their superstitions and idolatries to his worship and service, is the main scope of this prophecy, as well as that of Isaiah.† The destruction of ancient Babylon, the great enemy of the Old Testament church, was followed by the return into their own land of the pious captives who had so long mourned the desolations of Zion, while they wept “by Babel’s streams.” So,

* Chap. 1. 5.

† Chap. xiv. 1, 2.

the destruction of anti-Christianism, modern Babylon, shall be followed by the return of the Jews from their infidel apostacy, accompanied with the conversion of the nations of the earth, that are now in darkness. "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."* "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together the outcasts of Judah from the four corners of the earth."† These promises remain yet unfulfilled in the extensive sense in which they were designed by the Spirit of God; they belong to the period of the millennial glory of the church. When that time shall have arrived, and these promises have been fulfilled, then shall the social covenanting foretold by Jeremiah have taken place, but not till then. For this prospective exemplification of the duty is inseparably connected with the return of both Jews and Gentiles to the acceptable worship of the true God; asking the way to Zion they say, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." They make covenanting a means of their returning to the service of God, and for establishing them in their reformation.

The view which I have given of the time to which this prophecy refers, coincides with the views of commentators generally; indeed, I know not a single writer worthy of being called an expositor of scripture, who has applied it to the return of the Jews from ancient

* Is. xiv. 1.

† Is. xi. 12.

Babylon, to the exclusion of the other. Michaelis says it is spoken not only of literal, but also of mystical Babylon.*

“This suits better with the Jews in the latter day, upon the fall of mystical Babylon, when they shall be converted and return to their own land, and shall ask their way thither, or else by Zion may be meant the church of God in Gospel times, as it often is; the way unto which the converted Jews will ask, being determined to give up themselves to it, and become members of it; saying, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten; making an agreement or covenant with one another, and the churches to which they join themselves, to walk together in all the ways, ordinances, and commandments of the Lord; which agreement or covenant ought to be perpetually observed, and never forgotten. Kimchi† owns that this part of the verse belongs to the days of the Messiah.”‡

The context contains the most conclusive evidence that the prophecy was not fulfilled, except very partially, by the return of the Jews from ancient Babylon; because “the children of Israel” as well as those “of Judah” are included in the return to Zion, and as joining themselves “to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.” The children of Israel, as thus distinguished from the children of Judah, are the ten tribes, who having existed as a distinct kingdom for two hundred and fifty

* “Loquitur vero de Babele, non solum proprie dicta, sed et mystica.”—Notes on Jeremiah, l. 1.

† A Jewish Rabbi.

‡ Gill on the place.

years, were carried away captives by Shalmonazer, and their kingdom destroyed. These, as is well known, did not return with the children of Judah; nor have they yet returned from their captivity. This fact establishes beyond doubt that the prophecy refers not only to the period of the gospel dispensation, but is still future. And of this future time it is predicated that "the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, saying, come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

V. Social covenanting is recognized in the New Testament.

1. The apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Corinthians alludes to a religious transaction of this kind as having taken place in the churches of Macedonia. The object which the apostle has immediately in view is the obtaining of pecuniary aid "for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."* He urges the liberality of the churches in Macedonia as an example worthy of being followed by those of Corinth. "And this they did," says Paul, "not as we hoped, but first gave their own-selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."† Here the apostle alludes to something as having been done by the "churches of Macedonia," of so important and solemn a character that he calls it a giving of "their own-selves to the Lord." What does the apostle mean when he says that the Macedonians "gave their own-selves to the Lord? Is it that they gave themselves to the Lord by making a profession of the name

* Rom. xv. 26.

† 2 Cor. viii. 5.

of Jesus, and organizing themselves as Christian societies? Most obviously this cannot be the meaning of the apostle's language, for they had given themselves to the Lord many years before this; indeed, their previous profession of Christianity is attested in the context; for the transaction was the doing of "the churches of Macedonia." Is it that they gave themselves to the Lord by participating of the Lord's supper? I think not; for, although a participation of the Lord's supper might with great propriety be called a giving of themselves to the Lord, yet it could not have been cause of surprise to the apostle. That the churches in Macedonia should commemorate the death of their Redeemer, could be no unexpected event to Paul. The Lord's supper, it may be fairly presumed, was regularly commemorated by the churches in Macedonia as it was in other churches. The apostle, of course, when he heard of them, expected to hear of their conformity to the will of Christ in this as well as other respects. The surprise expressed by the apostle proves that the matter referred to was not the performance of an ordinary duty, frequently occurring, at short, if not stated periods, such as the sacrament of the supper; but the performance of an extraordinary duty, occurring only occasionally, as called for by the providence of God to the church. There is no other sense that can be attached to the words "gave their own-selves to the Lord," but that of social covenanting. There is nothing in the nature of the case, or of the circumstances that invalidates this exposition of the apostle's language. I feel warranted, then, in pointing to this fact, as an example of social co-

venanting in New Testament times. A modern writer distinguished for his critical acumen, gives the following paraphrase of the words "And this they did, not merely as we expected and hoped, but even beyond all we could have imagined; for they first gave themselves and all they had entirely to the honor and service of the Lord; and having thus surrendered all they were, and all they possessed, to Christ and his cause, they in effect resigned themselves to us by the will of God."* Equally explicit is the remark of Henry, "They solemnly, jointly and unanimously made a fresh surrender of themselves, and all they had unto the Lord Jesus Christ."†

2. It may be a difficulty to some, as it has been urged as an objection by others, that social covenanting does not find a place among New Testament institutions. The difficulty, however, will vanish when it is recollected that covenanting is a moral duty. Typical obligations ceased with the abrogation of the Jewish economy; they were created by a law which limited their duration. The death of Christ, the antetype, necessarily superceded all typical obligations, and abolished the Jewish system; but it did not abolish moral obligations. These are permanent; are not, and cannot be affected by any change in the external administration of the church. Being once made known as the will of God, they continue unalterable. It is not necessary, therefore, that they should be republished. Hence the moral law is not formally republished in the New Testament, but its continued obligation is assumed and taken for granted.

* Doddridge on the place. † Henry on the place.

SECTION III.

THE PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF SOCIAL
COVENANTING.

In the preceding section I have proved that churches and nations are required to enter into covenant with God, under the New Testament dispensation; that it is a moral, therefore a permanent duty, continuing unaffected by any change of external administration of religion. I now proceed to show that churches and nations having entered into covenant with God, the covenant obligation is perpetual, binding the church or nation in all succeeding generations. Social covenanting is not only a duty which churches and nations *should* perform, but being performed, the covenant obligation thus created extends throughout the duration of the society. Future generations are embraced in the obligation, because they are represented in the covenant transaction. Such is the principle laid down in the testimony of the church. "That the obligation of these covenants* extends to those who were represented in the taking of them, although removed to this or any other part of the world, in so far as they bind to duties not peculiar to the church in the British isles, but applicable in all lands."†

The whole visible church of God is under formal covenant obligation, because of the covenant entered into

* The national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant.

† Terms of Communion, No. 4.

by the church at Horeb. And it is so, irrespective of any formal recognition on the part of the church in this, or in any succeeding period of her history. The obligation of that transaction is perpetual. The doctrine maintained by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in her fourth term of communion, is only an application of the same principle to such parts of the visible church as entered into covenant with God in Britain and Ireland, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The national covenant of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant, were not the deeds of the whole visible church, like that at Horeb; and therefore do not extend their obligation to the whole visible church; they extend to those only "that were represented in the taking of them." But the permanency of the obligation is exemplified in the latter as well as in the former; in both it extends to all that were represented in the respective covenant transactions. The perpetual obligation of social covenanting proceeds on a principle which is frequently recognized in the scriptures: it forms the basis of some of the most important transactions recorded in the Bible. A brief notice of these may illustrate the subject, and aid the reader in forming a correct judgment of the direct arguments which shall afterwards be laid before him.

1. The covenant of works is an illustration of the principle. It is not necessary for me to prove that such a transaction took place; I assume it as a scripture truth; which will be admitted by all evangelical readers. Even those who deny the covenant of works, admit that in consequence of Adam's first transgression his poste-

rity are exposed to evil. However far such may depart from sound doctrine as to the nature of the evil, and the mode of its transmission there is in their admission, sufficient to establish the correctness of my illustration. They admit that according to a divine constitution of things, the posterity of Adam are involved in the effects and consequence of his first transgression. It is a doctrine distinctly stated in scripture, that "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."* Scripture thus recognizes the application of a principle which includes persons in the obligation of a transaction into which they did not personally enter. Adam was the representative of all his natural posterity, and when he sinned, they sinned in him; because they were included in the obligation of the covenant by representation.

2. In the covenant of redemption the same principle is applied. By it blessings are entailed on persons who were not parties to the covenant, but who were included in it by representation. The Lord Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption, came under obligation to obey the law, and endure the punishment due to sin, in the place of all whom he represented in that transaction; and the benefits flowing from the fulfilment of this obligation are enjoyed by all who were represented by the Redeemer.

The covenants of works and redemption illustrate the principle that posterity may be included in an obligation into which they have not personally entered. I do not say that these cases establish the perpetual obliga-

* Rom. v. 18.

tion of social covenanting, but they prove that the principle on which it proceeds is a scriptural one; it is thus vindicated from the charge of incorrect principle; every objection of this nature may with equal propriety be made against the covenant of works or the covenant of redemption. If the reader is unwilling to renounce these doctrines, he should hesitate before he objects to the perpetual obligation of social covenanting; for they include an application of the same principle with the latter.

3. Infant baptism is another illustration of the principle that obligation may be constituted irrespective of personal action. The children of Christian parents have a right to the ordinance of baptism, "Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy," says the apostle.* The baptismal obligations which parents take upon themselves, bind their children when they arrive at adult years; they are thus under obligation by the representative acts of their parents to renounce the devil, the world and the flesh. The value of this illustration will be admitted by all who recognize infant baptism as a divine appointment.

4. The principle which brings posterity under obligation to the performance of certain duties, in virtue of the deeds of their representatives in former generations, is recognized and acted upon by civil society. Political treaties and commercial arrangements entered into between nations, are held obligatory in succeeding generations, upon the parties covenanting. Redress for injuries arising out of violations of the law of nations is

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

frequently claimed and obtained from a generation succeeding that in which the injury was given. Not one individual personally concerned may be surviving in one or other of the commonwealths; and yet, redress for injuries may be claimed and obtained. In such cases the perpetual obligation of covenants are recognized.

5. The scriptures record a remarkable instance of the perpetual obligation of a covenant upon a society, in the case of the transaction between the princes of Israel and the Gibeonites. This political covenant, though in some respects fraudulently obtained by the Gibeonites, was held valid by the Israelites, because their princes had sworn unto the Gibeonites, by "the Lord God, to let them live."* The obligation thus contracted, is recognized by the Lord God, more than four hundred years afterwards, when he punished the nation of Israel for having slain some of the Gibeonites. The exemplification of the principle is the more striking in this case, as the punishment was not inflicted at the time the covenant was violated, nor upon those who were personally concerned in it, but upon a succeeding generation, half a century afterwards.†

These transactions to which I have referred, establish a strong presumption in favor of the perpetual obligation of social covenanting, inasmuch as they recognize the principle that societies may be bound by the deeds of a preceding generation.

I. The perpetual obligation of social covenanting is proved by scripture examples, in which posterity is specifically included by God.

* Joshua ix. 15, 19.

† 2 Sam. xxi. 1.

1. "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."* This covenant was made forty years before the time in which Moses uttered the words of the quotation. During this period, the whole congregation of Israel had died;† that is, all the adults of whom the congregation consisted at the time the covenant at Horeb was entered into, were removed by death, except Joshua and Caleb, and Moses himself; with these exceptions, there remained now only such as were minors at the time of that transaction, and therefore incapable of personally entering into covenant, or such as were born subsequently to it; and yet Moses says that the covenant was made "with us, even with us, who are all of us here alive this day." Such as were minors, and the millions too unborn at the time of the transaction, were included in the covenant; and its obligations extended to them as it had done to the original covenanters at Horeb.

2. The covenant made in the land of Moab, immediately before the Israelites passed over Jordan to enter upon their national inheritance, furnishes me with a second proof. In this transaction three different classes are specified, as embraced in the covenant obligation. The first is the congregation who personally engaged in the covenant. The second consists of such as did not personally covenant, though they were present in the congregation at the time of covenanting; namely, minors, and it may be others, who, like them, were re-

* Deut. v. 2, 3.

† Numbers xiv. 29, 35.

presented by the congregation. The third class consists of such as were not present. "Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day."* The including of the second of the classes here specified in the covenant transaction, establishes the perpetual obligation of social covenanting. Though not one of this class personally swore the covenant, nevertheless it is said to have been made *with them*; but it could have been made *with them* only through their representatives. The including of the third class in the covenant, is proof directly in point. This establishes not only the principle of representation, which virtually implies the perpetual obligation of covenanting, it also presents an example in which the Spirit of God testifies that the covenant made in the land of Moab extended its obligation to succeeding generations. "Also with him that is not here with us this day." Some commentators explain this, it is true, of such of the Israelites as were absent on account of sickness or otherwise; but were this admitted, it could not affect the argument in the least; the case would still furnish an example of persons being brought under covenant obligation, irrespective of personal agency. For it is a matter of no importance, as far as the value of the argument is concerned, whether the absence spoken of, arose from distance of place or distance of time. But there is no evidence whatever, that those referred to were existing members of the congregation at the time, and absent

* Deut. xxix. 14, 15.

only on account of sickness or otherwise; the fair and obvious meaning of the language is that the covenant was made with succeeding generations, as well as with that then present before the Lord. The same thing had been stated to the congregation in relation to the Horeb covenant, as has been shown in the preceding example—that it had been made with them—though by far the greater part of the congregation were not then born, and such as were born were minors at the time the transaction took place. And now entering into covenant themselves, they are told by the Spirit of God, that their posterity is embraced in the same deed, as they themselves had been embraced in that of Horeb. It is of considerable importance to my argument to remark that the Jewish commentators have explained the words, as I have done, of posterity—“not only you, but those that will come after you, your sons and your sons’ sons,—the people of future generations.”* Even such as were absent, and the unborn children of the whole company to the *latest posterity*, were in some sense included in the covenant.†

II. God charges upon *posterity* the breach of covenants which had been made with their *fathers*.

“Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which he made with them, when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt.”‡ “They are turned back to the iniquity of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words; and they went after other Gods, to serve them:

* Aben Ezra and Jarchi. See Gill on the place.

† Scott on the place. ‡ Deut. xxix, 25.

the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.”*

In these passages of scripture, specific charges of covenant breaking are preferred. In the second place these charges are preferred, not against the fathers with whom the covenant was made, but against their posterity. Comparing these two facts together, I am unavoidably led to conclude that the covenant obligation extended to posterity; otherwise posterity could not have been charged with breach of covenant. The commission of sin, which the fathers had covenanted to abstain from, would not have exposed their posterity to the charge of covenant breaking, if they had not been included in the covenant obligation. It would have been sin, it is true, but it would not have been *the sin* which is here charged upon posterity; for covenant breaking is not only a transgression of the law of God, but a transgression of it in despite of a covenant obligation; and as God administers his government in perfect equity, he would not have charged the Israelites with breaking a covenant which he had made with their fathers, if they had not been included in the covenant, in consequence of its perpetual obligation.

III. The perpetual obligation of social covenanting arises out of the nature of ecclesiastical and national society.

1. Ecclesiastical and national societies are moral persons. By a moral person I mean that each of these kinds of society has an understanding and a will of its own, by which it perceives, deliberates, determines and acts. An individual person, is one that has the power

* Jer. xi. 10.

of understanding and willing; the name *moral* person is therefore applied to a *society*, having an understanding and a will common to the whole body, by which, though made up of a vast number of individuals, it possesses the power of knowing, deliberating, determining, and acting. A moral person may enter into contracts and covenant obligations; and these are as valid when entered into, as the covenant obligations of individual persons. Being moral persons, churches and nations are capable of entering into covenant with God; and that it is their duty to do so, I have demonstrated in the preceding section. Such obligations, when constituted agreeably to the will of God, are necessarily perpetual; for it is not the individuals merely of which the society consists, but the society itself, as a moral person, that covenants. In the case of personal covenanting, no one will question that the covenant obligation extends throughout the whole life of the individual; the same principle prevails in relation to social covenanting: the obligation extends throughout the duration of the moral person.

2. The church is a permanently existing body. It has undergone, indeed, several changes in its external administration, but it is the same now that it was when first constituted. The church in the wilderness of Sinai is identical with the church in the days of Adam and Eve, and continues still the same moral person in the nineteenth century. The removal by death of individual members, does not destroy the identity of the moral person, which remains unaffected by the removal of a thousand generations. Covenant obligation enter-

ed into by the church, in any given period, continues of perpetual obligation throughout all succeeding generations, and that too, on the recognised principle that the church continues the same moral person.

3. National society does not possess an undying constitution like that of the church, it may be dissolved; and history presents a vast number of instances of the entire dissolution of nations. But the obligation created by national covenanting, extends throughout the duration of the society, because it is a moral person; and if the perpetuity of the obligation may be limited, it is limited only by the moral person ceasing to exist.

SECTION IV.

OBJECTIONS TO SOCIAL COVENANTING
EXAMINED.

Social covenanting has been objected to, on the general ground that it is not a moral duty. This the reader will perceive, is taking for granted what ought to have been proved. As far as I am aware, this has never been even attempted: that the duty is not moral, has been often asserted, but it still remains an assumption, unsupported by proof. In a preceding section, I have laid before the reader abundant evidence that social covenanting *is a moral duty*; I maintain, therefore, that no objection, however specious, can be sustained on principles of fair reasoning. Doctrines which contradict each other cannot both be true; that which establishes the truth of one of them, overturns the other. Having proved, then, that social covenanting is a moral duty, every objection necessarily falls to the ground.

Objections, however false in principle, may be urged so artfully as to become serious difficulties to some inquirers after the truth. For the sake of such, I shall devote this section to the consideration of some of the more plausible objections made against social covenanting.

I. It is objected that the duty was not observed in any age preceding the Jewish dispensation.

1. I answer in reply to this objection, that the silence

of a particular part of scripture, in respect of a duty clearly discovered in another part, can be of no force. It is not for man to determine how frequently, and where God shall make known to him the rule of duty. It is enough to know that it is revealed, whether in the beginning, the middle, or the end of the Bible. This part of the history of the church, including a period of twenty-five hundred years, is given in the book of Genesis. In a history so brief, it is unreasonable to expect much doctrinal statement; and it is still more unreasonable, in these circumstances, to argue against a doctrine because the exemplification of it is not related. The same kind of objection might be brought against nearly the whole system of divine truth; and indeed has been used as an argument against the morality of the sabbath. The principle of the objection is logically incorrect; the silence of one part of scripture does not disprove what is revealed in another. If such objections were sustained, they would controvert not only social covenanting, but the morality of the sabbath; nay, more, they would set aside the whole moral law, none of the precepts of which are once mentioned antecedent to the time of the giving of the law at Sinai, except the sixth, which was enjoined upon Noah. Nevertheless, it is presumed that every Christian will concede that the precepts of the moral law were known to the patriarchs; and so may the duty of social covenanting have been practised by the patriarchal church, though not mentioned in the book of Genesis.

2. There are strong reasons for believing that social covenanting was practised by the patriarchs. "Then

began men, to call upon the name of the Lord.”* This includes the whole of divine worship, and by inference, at least, that expression of homage which is given by social covenanting.

One example of covenanting is stated, which, though personal, exemplifies in one view of it, the principle of social covenanting. I refer to the case of Jacob, who “vowed a vow, saying, if the Lord will be with me, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.”† The descendants of Jacob, many centuries afterwards, claim an interest in this transaction: “He found him in Bethel, and there He spake *with us*.”‡ It is very evident that the promises made to Jacob, in faith of which he made his vow, referred principally to his posterity; and his posterity claim their covenant relation. Comparing these two passages of scripture together, a fact of great importance in this discussion, is established; namely, that Jacob, when he “vowed a vow,” at Bethel, represented his descendants, of whom the visible church was to consist till the fulness of the time should have come, when the wall of partition should be broken down.

II. It is objected that the Lord Jesus Christ did not observe this duty.

1. This objection assumes the ground that every duty obligatory on Christians, must have been exemplified by the Redeemer; but such is not the case. There are many duties obligatory upon Christians that he did not,

* Gen. iv. 26. “Quod per synecdochen totum dei cultum designat.” Stockius in verbo kera.

† Gen. xxviii. 20.

‡ Hos. xii. 4.

nay, he could not exemplify. Being perfectly sinless, he could not exemplify the duty of contrition and sorrow for sin, nor of repentance.

Religious covenanting is of the same nature; it is a means for the attainment of greater sanctification, which the perfection of the Redeemer rendered impossible. It is a taking hold, in dependence on divine grace, of the promise of salvation; it includes personal obligation to the divine law, which the Lord Jesus Christ did not owe; and finally, it includes an acknowledgement of sin which he could not make, because he was without sin.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ exemplified the duty of covenanting in the only form competent to his character and work. He covenanted to obey the whole law of God most perfectly, in the place of his people, as well as to bear the punishment of their sins. That law which he himself thus covenanted to obey, and did fulfil to the utmost, he administers to his people as the rule of their conduct. Social covenanting is a voluntary assent to this obligation, laid upon them by their Redeemer.

III. It is objected that the duty of social covenanting was not observed by the apostles.

1. I remark generally, in answer to this, as I have done to the first objection, that the silence of New Testament writers as to the fact of social covenanting being observed by the apostles, does not disprove the obligation of the duty. If the New Testament writers professed to give a complete history of all the religious transactions of the period, then there might be a pre-

sumption in favor of the objection; but as they do not, it is without force. That part of the New Testament which refers to the ministry of the apostles possesses very little of a historical character. With the exception of the book of Acts, the apostolical period furnishes only epistolary writing, the aim of which is not to relate events, but to furnish doctrinal and practical instruction.

2. Occasional allusions to passing events is all that might be expected in these circumstances; accordingly, the apostle refers to a case of social covenanting, in his second epistle to the Corinthians;* and such an allusion is all that might be fairly anticipated by a reader of the New Testament.

IV. It is objected that in the “fuller and clearer” expositions of the moral law given in the New Testament, there is no precept enjoining covenanting.

1. This objection assumes as a fact that the New Testament contains fuller and clearer explanations of moral principles, than the Old Testament writings. This, however, so far from being evident, is certainly incorrect; it is only a very small portion of the former that is devoted to the consideration of moral principle, the chief part of which is the sermon on the mount. It is of importance here to remark, that in the New Testament, moral principles are taken for granted, rather than formally laid down. The sermon on the mount illustrates this. The Saviour takes for granted, that those to whom he was preaching were acquainted with the precepts of the moral law; and assuming this, he corrects the false glosses which the Pharisees had in

* Chap. viii. 5. See the exposition of this passage, See. ii. 5.

many instances given of them. The aim of the Saviour was not to make the law plainer, or more explicit, but to remove the rubbish which the Jewish doctors had thrown over it; a duty as much needed in the present age, as it was during the personal ministry of the Saviour; a duty, however, which was performed by him, not by giving a fuller or clearer exposition of the law, but by applying it to his hearers in its *original* and *obvious* meaning.

2. The writings of Moses contain a full and explicit statement of the precepts of the moral law; nor are they formally repeated in the subsequent parts of the sacred writings, whether of the Old or New Testament. They are indeed frequently alluded to, but at the same time always assumed as the law of God; nor are they increased, or in any way modified. It was not necessary that they should be so; being moral, they necessarily continue in force.

The silence which, in the judgment of the objector, pervades the New Testament on the subject of social covenanting, is deemed an argument against its moral obligation, but the objection is clearly a non sequitur; the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The same objection has been made against the morality of the Christian sabbath; and might, with equal propriety be made against the first and second precepts of the decalogue. The fact that a moral principle is once established, sufficiently explains, in any given instance, the subsequent silence of scripture on the subject; moral principles are not susceptible of change, their obligation is permanent, irrespective of circumstances.

SECTION V.

THE TIME WHEN SOCIAL COVENANTING MAY
BE PERFORMED.

Social covenanting, though a duty of permanent obligation, is not however periodical, like the positive institution of the Lord's supper; it is not to be engaged in, at stated and regularly returning periods; the frequency of the duty must be determined by the existing state of the party covenanting, and the aspects of providence in relation to it; the nature of the duty illustrates this. Covenanting is an act of allegiance to the true God; it is a promise sanctioned by the solemnity of an oath, to do what God requires, and abstain from what he forbids, in dependence upon his grace and aid; as an oath of allegiance, it is not called for at stated periods, the particular time must be regulated by circumstances. However valuable covenanting may be as a means of grace, the reader will perceive that covenant obligation does not depend upon the repetition or frequency of covenanting; a society having entered into covenant, the obligation continues till the end proposed by it be attained, irrespective of any subsequent act. Neither a church nor a nation can withdraw this voluntary expression of their homage, nor can the covenant obligation constituted by it, become outlawed; the obligation extends throughout the duration of the moral person, whether ecclesiastical or civil. It is want of attention

to this very important view of the subject, that has given rise to an objection frequently made to covenanters of the present age,—“you are not covenanters, there is not one living in your community that has sworn the covenants.” Such remarks argue but little acquaintance with the nature of the duty, or its permanent obligation. The church is the same moral person now that she was when she renewed her covenant obligation at any former period of her history. The obligation therefore is upon her now, as certainly as if she had renewed her covenant only yesterday; and every individual becoming identified with her, gives his solemn assent to the obligation constituted by such covenant deeds, and is, in the spirit of the institution, a covenanter.

The administration of divine providence frequently designates the time of social covenanting. I shall state some of the circumstances that particularly require the performance of this duty.

I. When great and especial favors are enjoyed.

Sometimes God bestows upon a people, great and external advantages, or blesses them with extraordinary out-pourings of the spirit, when he sends times of refreshing from his holy presence. Such extraordinary expressions of the divine bounty and grace, demand extraordinary acknowledgments on the part of those who receive them. Accordingly, in scripture, the record of eminent favors is frequently followed by recorded acts of social covenanting; the children of Israel were excited by the former to the performance of the latter. Brought out of Egypt, and thus delivered from servitude, and at the same time restored to the enjoyment of

religious privileges of which they had long been deprived, they in obedience to the command of God, entered into covenant with him at Horeb. Having wandered forty years in the wilderness, to which they were adjudged because of their sins, they were admitted into the land of promise; but the goodness of God, which they had experienced in their wanderings, and in bringing them to a favorable termination, is acknowledged by a renewal of their covenants, in the land of Moab, immediately before they passed over Jordan to take possession of their inheritance.

In the beginning of the twenty-ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses gives a very interesting narrative of this transaction, in which the providential goodness of God is presented as a reason why they were called upon to renew their covenant engagement to be the Lord's people. "I have led you forty years in the wilderness, your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot; ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine, or strong drink; that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Keep, therefore, the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do."

The children of Israel, having passed over Jordan, vanquished their foes by the strength of God, and taken possession of their inheritance, "and the Lord had given rest unto them from all their enemies round about." Joshua assembles them, and "their elders," and "their heads," and "their judges." He recounts the beneficent providences which God administered to them, beginning with the call of Abraham, and con-

cluding with the overthrow of the Amorites; he then proposes to them to renew their covenant obligation, and to this they give their assent. "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, that they should serve the Lord God, and obey his voice."* Another example of the same kind is found in the seventy-sixth psalm, which was probably composed in reference to the destruction of the Assyrian army. Whether this was the event which the psalm celebrates, or some other, it contains abundant evidence in itself, that it refers to some extraordinary interposition of God in his providence, for the preservation of his chosen people. Because of this, they are called to the duty of social covenanting. "The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. When God arose to judgment to save all the meek of the earth. "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God; let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared."

The prospective history of the church, given by the prophet Isaiah, further illustrates this view of the duty. The very copious influence of the Holy Spirit, which is there promised, is spoken of as being immediately followed by covenant transactions. "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob;

* Joshua, chapters xxiii. and xxiv.

and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and shall surname himself by the name of Israel.”*

These instances of social covenanting, in connexion with the enjoyment of important, spiritual and temporal favors, have furnished practical direction to the people of God in all succeeding ages. Thus recommended by the approved examples of the flock, a time of favor should be a time of covenanting; that when God shews mercy to Zion, she may pay her vows.

Social covenanting, in such circumstances, has a very salutary effect upon the mind, by leading to a suitable improvement of divine goodness. It is not only an acknowledgment of benefits received, but a pledge also to serve God in the diligent and thankful use of his mercies. It is, at the same time, an expression of dependence upon God, that in him we live, and move, and have our being; and that from him cometh down every good and perfect gift.

II. When the people of God are in imminent danger.

A community may be in danger of losing its religious or civil rights; it may be exposed to great temptation, to forsake the laws of God, or in a state of backsliding; having departed, in many things, from the ways of truth and righteousness. A tendency even to any of these things, might be exceedingly dangerous to the interests and prosperity of a society, and becomes a loud call upon it to engage in the duty of social covenanting. It is a valuable means in the successful resistance of the “enemy, when he comes in like a flood.” Hence

* Is. xliv. 3, 5.

God's ancient people so frequently resorted to this as a means of obviating danger, and promoting reformation.

An instance of social covenanting occurs in the reign of Hezekiah, which illustrates what I have now stated. During the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, there was a continued tendency to backsliding. "The people did yet corruptly."* During that of Ahaz, the immediate predecessor of Hezekiah, great corruption prevailed. "For the Lord brought Judah low, because of Ahaz, king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord."† Such were the circumstances in which Hezekiah attained the government of Judah. "Our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment and hissing, as ye see with your eyes."‡ As a means of reform, and of turning away "the wrath of the Lord," he proposes the duty of covenanting. "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us."§

The duty is repeatedly exemplified in similar circumstances, when Jehoiada and Josiah respectively induced the people of Judah to enter into social covenant with God.¶ And in a very striking manner also, when Ne-

* 2 Chron. xxvii. 2.

† 2 Chron. xxviii. 19.

‡ 2 Chron. xxix. 6, 8.

§ 2 Chron. xxix. 10.

¶ 2 Kings xi. 17, and xxiii. 3.

hemiah and the other pious Jews, returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah concludes a very extended confession of sin, by saying, "neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works." The "great distress" into which they brought themselves by their rebellion against God, is made the reason why they enter into covenant. "Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our princes, Levites and priests seal it."*

III. A time of reform, is a suitable season for covenanting.

A reformation begun, may be happily carried on, and successfully terminated by the aid of social covenanting. It brings the subject of reform, and the duties required, before the minds of the people, in a very solemn and influential manner; it increases, and diffuses the spirit of reform in no ordinary degree, as the past history of the people of God most satisfactorily shows.

It is valuable, in another point of view: it is calculated to prevent a relapse into the backsliding course from which they may have returned.

From the days of David, till those of Asa, no period surpassed the latter for exemplary piety: it was perhaps, not even equalled, by that of Solomon. The ido-

* Neh. ix. 34, 35, 38.

latrous practices which had been introduced into the land by Solomon and his immediate successors, were corrected by Asa. "For, he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandments. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him."* This was emphatically, a period of reformation: but, it was at the same time a season of covenanting. For "all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon, gathered themselves together at Jerusalem: and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them: and the Lord gave them rest round about." †

The Scottish covenanters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries exemplified this view of the duty. They followed the footsteps of the flock, endeavoring to secure, and advance the interests of the reformation by social covenanting. This was the object of the national covenant of Scotland which was first entered into, in the year 1580, when the reformation from popery in that country, had been established. "We promise and sware," say they, on that important transaction "by

* 2nd Chron. xiv. 3, 4, 5.

† 2nd Chron. xv. 9, 10, 12, 15.

the great name of the Lord our God, to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion; and that we shall defend the same, and resist all those contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocations, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our hands, all the days of our life.” More than half a century afterwards, the second reformation was accompanied by a renewal of the national covenant; thus illustrating the principle, that a time of reformation is a suitable time for social covenanting. The application to England and Ireland, of the principles of the second reformation, contained in the Westminster confession of faith, larger and shorter catechisms, form of church government and directory for worship, was a very extraordinary attainment: then, Zion put on her “beautiful garments;” then, was she adorned with the beauties of reformation. Then, too, did she enter into covenant, vowing “unto the mighty God of Jacob” to maintain, and hold fast these principles without wavering.

SECTION VI.

THE STATE OF MIND NECESSARY FOR SOCIAL COVENANTING, AND THE ADVANTAGES ARISING FROM IT.

Vowing unto God is a very solemn act of worship; it requires therefore, a suitable and becoming state of mind: the mere external act, is not acceptable to God, it is on the contrary displeasing. It is the state of mind, from which the outward act proceeds, that gives it the character of acceptable worship, in the sight of God. When this does not exist, the searcher of hearts says respecting such acts, "this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." In covenanting, as in all other religious services, God requires the heart; "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

I illustrate the state of mind necessary for social covenanting in the following particulars.

I. A lively sense of the divine presence.

The omniscience and omnipresence of Jehovah will not be called in question by any man of sound mind; but, in a great many instances; the belief of these attributes of God, is merely theoretical: they are a part of the profession of all, who believe in the existence of God; yet frequently this profession exerts no practical

influence on the mind. Men often live as if God neither knew, nor cared about the state of their minds. Every act of sin is practical atheism. Were the consideration, that God knows and sees what men think and do, more vividly impressed on their minds, it would keep them from much sin. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."*

Even believers, sometimes practically forget God; and then, they fall into sin. This is more frequently exemplified however, by acts of will-worship than overt acts of disobedience: they are more liable to commit sin by neglecting the state of their minds, than by external acts of transgression. It will be most advantageous to believers to endeavor always to act as in the sight of God: this state of mind is necessary for performing in an acceptable manner the duty of social covenanting. To God belongs the prerogative of searching the heart; and is not to be imposed upon by the feigned submission of outward obedience: it is well then, for those who covenant, to remember this. They swore unto God; not only *by* his dread name; but, *unto* him, vowing obedience to him as their Sovereign Lord. And the more that their minds at the time of covenanting are impressed with the consideration that God sees them, the more conscientious will they afterwards be, in paying their vows. The deep and solemn effect pro-

* Ps. l. 21, 22.

duced on the mind by this, will subsequently operate as an inducement to covenant keeping.

II. Deep humiliation because of sin.

The existence of sin is presupposed in all our homage to the Deity; in every act of worship by which we profess to serve him, and acknowledge him as our God. Christianity is predicated on a state of sin; and its design is to bring back *sinful* man to a state of friendship with God. "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." It is a necessary duty to confess our sins unto God; made necessary, not only by the beneficial results flowing from unfeigned confession, or by the consideration of propriety, but because it is commanded by God. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Christians are not *entirely* freed from sin, though they are delivered from its *dominion*: it does not reign in their members, yet it sometimes leads them into captivity to the "law of sin." The remainder of it which dwells in believers, while they are in this world, and from which they shall be entirely delivered, only when they enter into their everlasting rest, is to them the cause of continual grief; a grief sometimes so poignantly felt, that they exclaim in the language of the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Inseparable from evangelical confession, is humiliation because of sin: sincere confession of sin cannot be made without great self abasement. "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves,

therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." This state of mind ought to be in continued exercise; and indeed will be exercised, in proportion to our advancement in personal holiness. In solemn acts of worship, however, humiliation for sin is particularly required. For the profitable enjoyment of the Lord's supper, for example, Christians readily perceive the value of this state of mind; and it is presumed, that the more Christians feel humbled on account of sin, the more securely will their faith take hold of Christ, represented to them in this ordinance.

Covenanting is a duty which especially requires to be done in an humble state of mind. There are two considerations which illustrate this. The first of these, is past sins. Joining themselves to the Lord in covenant, Christians voluntarily take the divine law as the rule of their obedience. It is this which they covenant to perform. And comparing themselves with the law, they learn how much they have come short of their duty in past times. They mourn over sin, thus brought to remembrance, and loathe themselves because of it. Scriptural examples of social covenanting are therefore generally accompanied with an acknowledgment of sins. The sins of the church, and the sins of the commonwealth are confessed; and the parties covenanting humble themselves before God because of these. "We have done wickedly; neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments, and thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness

that thou gavest them.”* Our ancestors followed this approved example, when they entered into covenant. And because we “are guilty of many sins and provocations against God, and his son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest,” say they, “by our present distresses and dangers, the fruits thereof; we profess and declare, before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled for our own sins, and for the sins of these kingdoms: especially that we have not as we ought, valued the inestimable benefit of the gospel; that we have not labored for the purity and power thereof; and that we have not endeavored to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us.”†

A second consideration, is the remaining corruptions of our hearts. We are in danger of being ensnared by these into the commission of sin and the violation of our covenant engagements; hence the necessity of putting on humbleness of mind. This state of mind throws a safeguard around the Christian, because it leads him to confide more upon God and less upon himself. “Pride goeth before destruction; and an haughty spirit before a fall.” But the grace of the Lord sustains the humble, and enables them to pay their vows.

III. Sincerity of purpose.

1. No worship can be acceptably rendered to God that does not flow from sincerity of purpose. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. “He is delighted with truth

* Neh. ix. 33-35. † Solemn League and Covenant.

in the inward parts.” And his command is, “my son give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”

As covenanting is a very solemn act of worship, sincerity is particularly required. On this subject the mind may be easily deceived; and as in other acts of worship, mere excitement of feeling and sentimental emotion may take the place of sincere purpose of heart to serve God; so, in covenanting, excitement may be mistaken for sincerity. This consideration should lead to the most serious reflection on the state of mind in which covenant promises are made; that, they who vow should do it in singleness of heart, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

2. Sincerity is not more necessary to the purity of the act of covenanting than to the fulfilment of the obligation. It is the absence of this that occasions so much covenant breaking. For “it is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy: and after vows to make inquiry.”* Sincerity of purpose is always connected with the fidelity of covenant keeping. Divine grace is never given to enable any man to perform vows that have not been entered into, in the fear of God. Acts of will-worship cannot be followed with divine approbation, nor will the Holy Spirit dwell in that heart that is not right with God. In the examples of covenanting given in scripture, sincerity is particularly noticed; and what is of great importance in this connection, the blessing of God is connected with the state of mind in which the act of covenanting is made. “And they

* Pro. xx. 25.

sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them; and the Lord gave them rest round about. Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth.”*

IV. In prudence.

The solemnity and importance of the duty of covenanting suggests the necessity of prudence. It is a matter of too much magnitude to be too hastily determined on: thoughtlessness on this point may ultimately lead to a failure; and the vow imprudently made may be as recklessly disregarded.

1. The covenanter should seriously consider the character of God: to him covenant engagements are made. He searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men. No one can possibly impose on him with feigned lips or acts of will-worship. And the more the mind of a covenanter is impressed with this idea, the more will he conscientiously make and keep his vows.

2. He should prudently consider his own character. Man has no power or capacity of his own to perform acceptably any religious service. “All his righteousness is as filthy rags.” The more that man knows this fact, the better will duty be performed. The sanctified knowledge of his own weakness will lead him to the rock that is higher than himself; and instead of confiding in his own strength, he will “trust in the Lord Jehovah.” While on the other hand, ignorance leads to pride, and “an haughty spirit goes before a fall.”

* 2 Chron. xv. 14, 15. Josh. xxiv. 14.

3. He should prudently consider the things which he covenants to perform. He may not bind himself to do things that are unlawful. Things agreeable to the will of God, and revealed as duties, are the matter of covenanting. And with these the covenanter should be familiar, that he may intelligently enter into the oath of God.

V. In faith of the divine promises.

Every Christian knows by experience, in part at least, his own weakness; and the Spirit of God speaking in the scriptures, distinctly reveals to him “that when he would do good, evil is present with him—that there is a law in his members warring against the law in his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin.”* But the scripture reveals also a might and a power sufficient for all his wants. “And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”† They that put their trust in God shall never be ashamed; they shall tread down all their spiritual foes. “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”‡

Faith is essential to right covenanting with God. The duty is man’s, but the strength by which it is performed is his; and it is the part of faith, to lean on him, that he may communicate needed grace and strength. The faith of the covenanter must take hold of the divine promises; and if he would fulfil his engagements he must continue to trust in these promises. The purposes however honest, and the strength of man

* Rom. vii. 21,23. † 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‡ Heb. iv. 16.

are at best far too feeble to be relied on; but the grace of God is sufficient. In firm reliance on this, let Christians make, and endeavor to keep their vows. There is no presumption in confiding on the strength of grace which God has promised to give, and commanded man to ask. There is no fear of failure where the arms of Omnipotence sustains! "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me. Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."*

The advantages arising from social covenanting next demand consideration.

1. Social covenanting is a bond of union. In the first place, it binds covenanters more closely to God. As rational creatures they are under law to him, and bound to obey all his commands, but by covenanting they recognize this obligation, and voluntarily bind themselves to perform it, and thus bind themselves to God, from whom they had been separated by sin. When men covenant in sincerity and truth, they take hold by faith of God's covenant of mercy, cheerfully receiving salvation from him, according to his own purpose of grace. God says, "I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Covenanters give their voluntary consent to this; he *brings* them to himself, and they *come*, binding themselves by a solemn pledge, to serve him. In the second place, covenanters bind themselves to one another. The people of God have a common interest in contending against their common enemies. Satan is never more successful than

* Phil. iv. 13. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

when he can disunite and separate them, in their affections, their views, or their aims. Covenanting is a happy means of uniting them in these respects. Bound together in one covenant to serve God, they feel more forcibly the relation of brotherhood, and the obligation to cherish the affection of love to one another. The matter of their covenant to which they bind themselves, is the truth of God, and this they mutually agree to maintain, and not to be "withdrawn from this blessed union," by lukewarmness to the truth of God. Thus, the members of the church are more closely united to one another, and a civil community also is bound together and strengthened by the bond of a national covenant. These too, have, a reciprocal and beneficial influence on one another. Without confounding the church and the state, each of these in its own place enters into covenant, binding itself to serve the Lord and obey his voice; and they mutually encourage one another in the good work of giving themselves "to the Lord," the one as a church and the other as a civil community.

2. Social covenanting is a public expression of homage to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the head of the church, which is his body; and he has a dominion over the nations. He promulges to the latter as well as to the former, the laws by which it is to be regulated. Both the church and civil society owe to the Mediator the duty of obedience; the one as well as the other is bound to do him homage. Covenanting is a public expression of this. The church thus renews her allegiance to her king and head, by swearing to obey his

laws. And thus, too, a civil society acknowledges the duty which it owes the Mediator, by pledging itself to that "righteousness which exalteth a nation," and recognizing the Mediator as "Prince of the kings of the earth."

3. It is a public testimony for truth. The matter of covenanting presents the duties which covenanters bind themselves to perform; and connected with this, an enumeration of scripture doctrines. A covenant is thus in one sense a confession of faith. It is not only an engagement to duty, but also an acknowledgement of divine truth. The specifications of truth will be more or less particular as circumstances may require. In a covenant designed to promote reformation, or prevent apostacy into error, the false principles from which the reformation is to be made, or into which there is danger of falling, will be particularly stated; and the truth to which these are opposed will form an important part of the covenant. For example, the national covenant of Scotland contains a testimony against the whole system of popish idolatry; and an avowal of the doctrines of truth vindicated by the reformation from popery. "We," said the Scottish covenanters, "believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, and subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm before God and the whole world, that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God and bringing salvation to man, which now is, by the mercy of God, revealed to the world by the preaching of the blessed evangel."

4. Social covenanting is a means of attaining holiness. The value of a pledge is well understood in

other things, as a means of obtaining an end. By it, a man binds himself to the performance of a thing pledged to; he thus takes a step which every principle of integrity urges him to maintain. So is covenanting an important means of growing in holiness. When indolence tempts to the neglect of duty, or "the law in the members" prompts to the commission of sin, the covenanter recollects his pledge. "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." The solemnity of an oath is felt by every good man as an additional motive to watch against sin and to perform duty. Whatever promotes personal piety must have a similar effect on a community entering into covenant. A church or a nation thus pledge themselves in the presence of earth and heaven, unto the living God, that they will serve him with all their heart and soul. Such a transaction must have a salutary effect on the community. It directs attention to duty, and impresses the obligation more seriously on the mind. And if made in dependence on divine grace, holiness will be the result. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation."

CHAPTER II.

THE DOMINION OF CHRIST.



SECTION I.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S DOMINION.

In the sacred writings, regal power is frequently ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ. "The government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called the Prince of Peace," says the prophet Isaiah. In the forty-fifth psalm, the royal office of Christ is taken for granted; and he is lauded because of the righteous exercise of his power. "The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." This view of the character of Christ, is of the very last importance to the church of God; she needs not only a prophet to instruct her, and a priest to make atonement for her sins, and intercede for her with God, but also a king to reign over her, who may preserve and protect her, and subdue all her enemies. The power of the Mediator is adequate to the necessity of the case; therefore, in the language of the prophet, the church is taught to say, "the Lord is

our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us."

I. The dominion of Christ is a delegated power.

1. It is given to him as he is Mediator.

The delegation of power to the Lord Jesus Christ holds a very prominent place in the New Testament writings, and is frequently declared in those of the Old Testament. At the eventful crisis when Christ commissioned his disciples to go into all the world, and preach the everlasting gospel in his name, and immediately before he ascended into heaven, he asserted this truth, "all power is given to me in heaven and in earth."* To the same effect is the testimony of Daniel, who in prophetic vision, had a view of the investiture of Christ with regal power. "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom."†

Jesus Christ, the Mediator, is divine; he is the true God and eternal life. He has indeed two natures, the nature of man as well as the nature of God; he is the Son of God, manifested in the flesh; "made of a woman, made under the law." But the Son of God took the human nature into personal union with himself, so that while the Mediator has two natures, he is *one* person. Agreeing with this, is the doctrine of the Westminster divines. "The only Redeemer of God's elect," say they, "is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and

* Matth. xxviii. 18. † Dan. vii, 13, 14.

continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person forever.”

2. Considered in his primary character as the Son of God, a divine person, power could not be delegated to him. Power necessarily belongs to deity; and the right of dominion, and the capacity of exercising it, are inseparable from divinity; because omnipotence is an essential attribute of God, and the right of governing his creatures a divine prerogative.

The Son of God, though a divine person, and therefore “equal,” with the Father and the Holy Spirit, “in power and glory,” by his own voluntary act became the servant of the Father. He did so, when he undertook the work of mediation between God and man. He did not cease to be divine, for that is impossible; but though a divine person, and therefore the Father’s equal, yet that he might be the mediator of the new covenant, he placed himself in a new and subordinate relation—that of being the Father’s servant. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”* And, says God the Father, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”†

The Son of God, in the relation of mediator of the new covenant, acts as the servant of the Father, and in this voluntary and assumed relation, power is conferred upon him. This point is put beyond the reach of controversy, by the consideration that nothing can be

* Phil. ii. 7. † Is. xlii. 2.

communicated to him, considered simply *as the Son of God*. When the scriptures, therefore, speak of power being delegated to the Lord Jesus Christ, they refer to him *as Mediator*. He hath received “authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man.”*

II. The power delegated to the mediator is moral.

It is not ability, or natural power to exercise dominion, that is conferred upon Christ. The divinity of the Mediator secures to him the attribute of omnipotence; and the possession of this, is an indispensable qualification for his mediatorial work. The power which he possesses in himself, as the Son of God, enables him to perform the functions of his office; but he requires a mediatorial right to exercise this power as Mediator. The gift of moral power gives the Mediator a right to govern; the divinity of the Mediator qualifies him for the exercise of the right. The former is that which is delegated; the latter is not, and cannot be conferred.

III. The dominion of Christ is delegated to him by the Father.

1. Considered in their absolute relations to one another, the persons of the Godhead are “equal in power and glory.” In the covenant of redemption, however, they enter mutually into specified engagements, respecting the salvation of sinners. The Father sustains the rights of the Godhead, by providing a Mediator, proposing the terms of reconciliation, and accepting his obedience for the justification of such as shall be saved. The Son represents elect sinners, and engages to make

* John v. 27.

his soul a ransom for their sins; thus, the Son voluntarily places himself in the relation of being the Father's servant.

2. In this relation of covenant superiority, the Father delegates the right of dominion to the Son. "All things are delivered to me of my Father. The Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man."*

3. The delegation of power to the Mediator harmonizes with the rights of the Deity. The dominion of Christ has been objected to, as inconsistent with the prerogatives of God; and the objection has been particularly urged against the view which extends his dominion beyond the church. I meet the objection in this place, because if it possesses any force, it presses against the mediatorial dominion over the church, as well as over the world. If it is true that the dominion of the Mediator over the world would exclude God from the government of the world, in like manner his dominion over the church would exclude God from the government of the church. But this is not even imagined by those who make the objection; without hesitation they admit the doctrine of Christ's dominion over the church. The objection lies really against the delegation of power to the Mediator at all, and not against any supposed extent of that power. This consideration alone, should satisfy every Christian that the objection is groundless. The dominion of Christ is dear to his disciples; they take refuge under its protection. "The

* Matth. xi. 27. Luke x. 22. John v. 22, 27.

Lord is our king, he will save us.”

In this connection I make two remarks further. First, a doctrine so clearly revealed in scripture, as is the delegation of power to the Mediator, cannot be successfully opposed by any inferential reasoning. An inference legitimately deduced from scripture, is as true as the scripture itself; but an opinion which operates against a revealed truth is not an inference from scripture. The word of God is consistent; the reasonings of men, and the inferences which they deduce from it, are frequently false. It is wiser, and safer then, for Christians to suspect the correctness of their own reasonings, than hold sentiments which have the direct tendency of charging the word of God with inconsistency. In the second place, so far from the delegation of dominion to the Mediator being inconsistent with the government of God, that it necessarily includes it. Power that is delegated, is in its very nature subordinate; and the claim to such is a distinct recognition of the right of him who delegated the power.

IV. The dominion of Christ is delegated to him as the reward of his obedience.

The salvation of sinners is based on the principle of mediation. God would not hold intercourse with them, no, not even for the purpose of dispensing mercy, otherwise than through a mediator. The work of mediation is put into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ; he only is entrusted with the work of reconciling God and man. “For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man

Christ Jesus.”* The Mediator accomplished his work by obedience and suffering. All he did and suffered was as Mediator. The divine law had no claim upon him personally, nor did he owe it any obedience for himself; it could not claim satisfaction from him, because he was without sin, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners.” The Mediator owed the law no personal obedience, because his human nature never existed by itself, had no personality of its own, and therefore could have no personal obligations. The Mediator is a divine person, he is the Son of God; in this view of his character it was impossible that he could be under any obligation to the law; for he is the law giver, the sovereign of heaven and earth.

But the Son of God, when he undertook the work of mediation, voluntarily engaged to satisfy divine justice, and obey the law in his human nature, as the saviour of sinners. In their name and on their behalf, the Mediator engaged to magnify the law and make it honorable. The obligations thus voluntarily assumed, were all fulfilled. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And, though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”† By a life of universal obedience, the Mediator fulfilled all righteousness: and in view of which, he could say, in the lan-

* 1 Cor. iii. 11, and 1 Tim. ii. 5.

† Gal. iv. 4, 5, and Heb. v. 8, 9.

guage of prophecy, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law is within my heart."* "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."† And, as he poured out his soul in expiatory suffering, he exclaimed in triumph, "It is finished." The price of redemption is paid; and God is glorified in the salvation of sinners. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."‡

The obedience and sufferings of the Mediator as the substitute of sinners, was the ground of his exaltation to mediatorial dominion and power. Because he humbled himself unto death, he was exalted unto dominion. The former constituted his mediatorial merit; the latter his reward. Because "he shall drink of the brook on the way, therefore shall he lift up the head."§

1. The reward of dominion was secured to the Mediator, in the covenant of redemption. This covenant contains the plan of divine mercy in relation to the salvation of all who are included in its promises: it is the mutual agreement of the persons of the Godhead, for the purpose of saving fallen men; to deliver them from going down to the pit. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, engage to one another in the covenant to perform certain specified stipulations, each having his own peculiar function. The Son engages to assume

* Ps. xl. 8. † Isaiah liii. 5, 6. ‡ John xvii. 4.

§ Ps. cx. 7.

our nature, and in this nature to make his soul an offering for sin. On the other hand, a reward is promised to him; I mean not here that he should "see of the travails of his soul and be satisfied." This indeed he has, but I refer to the dominion promised to him in the covenant. "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."* In the more extended view of the covenant given in the eighty-ninth psalm, the reward of dominion is still more clearly stated. "Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth. My covenant shall stand fast with him."†

2. The scriptures assert the fact, that the dominion of the Mediator is the reward of his obedience. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor.‡ Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Je-

* Is. liii. 11, 12. † Verses 4, 27, 28. ‡ Heb. ii. 9.

sus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Such is the testimony of the apostle Paul, and with this corresponds the ascription of praise given to the Redeemer in the book of Revelation, because, “he hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” This sealed book contained the designs of God, and to loose the seals is to unfold these designs in the administration of providence. The sufferings of the Mediator constitute his right to open the book and loose its seals. Therefore, “when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints, and they sung a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”† The Lord Jesus Christ has merited this exalted honor; he hath paid its price in blood. He hath taken the prey from the mighty, and delivered the lawful captive. The great enemy of God and man has been vanquished in the conflict for superiority. By his own sufferings the Mediator has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil. This dominion is therefore, the reward of victory; a victory over sin and Satan, over hell and death. “For when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in

* Phil. ii. 6, 11. † Rev. v. chap.

it.”* While angels and men unite, in one unbroken and continuous symphony, sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

3. The possession of this reward is coeval with the exercise of the mediatorial office. It is not only true that he *now* possesses dominion, it is as ancient as his mediatorship; kingly power is as necessary to the exercise of his office, as prophetic or priestly power. When the Mediator entered upon his office, he took possession of his dominion, and forthwith performed the functions of a king as well as those of prophet and priest. This may seem inconsistent with the fact that I am endeavoring to establish, that mediatorial dominion is the reward of obedience. There is however, no opposition; the difference is only apparent, while both harmonize in one unbroken consistency. A difference will be supposed to exist only when the principle of analogy is applied. Among men, the reward of great and important services cannot be bestowed till it is earned by actually doing them; a gift may be conferred, indeed, but properly speaking, a reward cannot, because there is no sufficient security that the reward will certainly be merited; and the insecurity of merit sets aside the reward till the merit is actually possessed. It is plain, however, that this rule cannot be applied to the Mediator. There was the most perfect security that his work would be finished, and that the stipulated reward would be merited. The security was as great as omnipotence and infinite faithfulness could make it.

* Heb. i. 3, and Col. ii. 15.

The guarantee was nothing less than the divinity of the Mediator, "Jehovah our righteousness:" and it is of importance in this connexion, to remind the reader that the certainty of the merit of Christ is explicitly recognized ages before his incarnation and death; nay, as early as the first message of mercy to a ruined world, in which it was promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law."*

4. The possession of dominion was necessary to the performance of the mediatorial functions. Without kingly power, the Mediator would not be a complete Saviour; but, as sinners have been saved by him, in all ages preceding his death, as well as since, so he must have possessed dominion before his death. The salvation of every sinner, from the days of Abel, downward, presupposes the exercise of mediatorial dominion. For, if sinners might be saved irrespective of this, in one age, why not in another? And if so, what reason can be given why Christ should be a king at all? Considered simply indeed as a reward, there was no absolute necessity that the dominion of Christ should be coeval with his mediatorship. But there is an absolute necessity arising from the use to which the reward is applied in carrying on the work of mediation. Accordingly, the Mediator is spoken of as a king *before* his death, as well as subsequently. And this view of his character is held up as the ground of comfort to the church. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

* Is. xlii. 4.

shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold thy king cometh unto thee. Where is he that is born king of the Jews?"* The perfect righteousness of Christ is the only procuring cause of salvation; and this having virtue to save sinners before it was actually wrought out, by his obedience unto death, furnishes a sufficient reason why he should be a king also before his death. If the worth and dignity of the Mediator's character gave an antecedent efficacy to his righteousness, it gave him at the same time an antecedent right to the reward of his righteousness.

The sufferings and humiliation of Christ were followed by exaltation; for, when he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. In this exaltation there was no new authority conveyed to the Mediator; it included no power that he did not antecedently exercise. "But its exercise was founded on his death; and after that death had actually occurred, then he was exalted in his humanity, and his exaltation was openly declared and manifested to the world, and the condition upon which it depended was shewn to have been satisfactorily accomplished."†

* Zech. ix. 9, and Matth. ii. 2.

† Incarnation of the Eternal Word, by the Rev. Marcus Dodds

SECTION II.

THE EXTENT OF THE MEDIATORIAL
DOMINION.

I. It is universal.

The dominion of Christ knows no limits except those of creation; it embraces in its wide and extended grasp, the whole universe of visible and invisible, of material and immaterial creation. The mediatorial dominion is of the same extent with the absolute dominion that belongs to God as Creator. This was given to Christ as his mediatorial dominion, without reserve or limitation. In virtue of this he rules in heaven, in earth, and in hell, over all created existence.

“Jesus Christ as the head of the church, rules by his infinite power, and in perfect wisdom and justice, over all the parts of the inanimate and irrational creation, and over all wicked men and devils; making them and all their changes, counsels and efforts, subservient to the manifestation of God’s glory in the system of redemption.”*

Very different views, indeed, from that now stated, are given of this subject by some, who limit the mediatorial authority of Christ to the church; while there seems also an unwillingness frankly to admit the fact of holding such an opinion. For on some occasions

* Reformation Principles, p. 77.

they are willing to be understood as admitting that the dominion of Christ is universal, and sometimes complain, with well affected indignation, that they are misrepresented when this opinion is charged upon them! It is not out of place, however, nor is it inconsistent with Christian charity, to state what they mean by this admission, for it is expressed in language that is calculated to mislead. When they admit that universal power belongs to Christ, they refer to his absolute power as the Son of God, and not to his power as Mediator. But from the circumstances in which the admission is made, it is liable to be misunderstood. I shall not say, however, that it is designed to mislead, but I do say that it has this tendency; and those who make the admission know well that the controversy is not respecting the power of Christ considered in his essential character as the Son of God, but has a respect only to his mediatorial character. To deny the former, is to deny the divinity of Christ, and therefore can be no subject of controversy with such as maintain that he is a divine person, "the true God and eternal life." But to use language which, though they believe to be true, and properly applicable to Christ as he is a divine person, which yet they do not believe to be true, nor applicable to him in his mediatorial character, is far from being candid, when this last relation is the subject of discussion! It savors more of mental reservation, than of Christian simplicity, and love of truth.

In the preceding section, I have shown that the power conferred upon Christ is not the power that belongs to him as God, because this cannot be communicated;

conferred or delegated power can only be ascribed to him, as he is Mediator. The reader requested to bear this important truth in mind, and apply it to the arguments which shall now be adduced to prove the universality of Christ's dominion. It will thus be seen, that not only power, but universal power has been given, and if *given*, it *must* have been *as Mediator*; for *as God*, power *could not* be conferred on him.

It has been urged against the universal extent of Christ's dominion, that only part of the rational creation submit to his authority, that wicked men and devils do not acknowledge it. In reply to this objection I remark,

1. That it proceeds on a misapprehension of the subject.

The objection assumes that the inquiry relates to the voluntary acknowledgment of the Mediator's power, but this is not the point at issue; the question is not whether the Mediator's power has been universally acknowledged. No man who understands the meaning of these terms could ever make this a subject of doubt; for, "we see not yet all things put under him."* The only question here is, has authority to exercise universal dominion been conferred on Christ? This I affirm. Nor is it in the least invalidated by the fact, that all rational creatures may not have acknowledged his authority. The universal extent of the authority conferred, is not in the smallest degree limited by any refusal of men or devils to acknowledge it; nay, such refusal does not even affect the *exercise* of the mediatorial authority.

* Heb. ii. 8.

There may be not only the right, but the actual exercise of authority, while the subjects of such exercised authority may still be opposed to it. But does this opposition abrogate the authority, or does it free the subjects of authority from obligation to obedience? No man reasons or thinks so, in relation to domestic government, or rightfully constituted civil authority. Parental power, or national government are not abrogated, because individuals under these respective jurisdictions may choose to resist them, nor are such freed from the obligation obedience. The same principle holds good in relation to the government of Christ: his right of government is altogether independent of the voluntary submission of its subjects.

2. The objection may be urged against the absolute dominion of God with as much propriety as against the delegated dominion of the Mediator. If it possesses any force against the latter, it is equally valid against the former; for if disobedience to lawful authority restricts it, then the absolute authority of God would also be restricted, and that precisely to the same extent. This shows most conclusively that the objection is wrong in principle, and would never have been made by any one, unless his mind had been previously warped by false views on the subject.

3. The principle of the objection, if fully carried out, would restrict the dominion of Christ to the invisible church. For all the professed members of the visible church do not in reality submit to his authority. If the right is to be tried by the fact of submission, then the reality of the submission must be taken into account.

There is evidently a confusion of ideas on the part of those who thus object to the universal extent of Christ's dominion. It consists in this; they confound the mediatorial dominion with the kingdom of grace; they are, however, distinct. The kingdom of grace includes only believers, the mediatorial dominion includes the whole kingdom of providence. The administration of the latter is given to the Mediator for the sake of the former.

Redeemed men and holy angels voluntarily submit to the authority of the Mediator. Wicked men and devils do not acknowledge his authority, they are, however, though unwilling under his dominion; and he controls and governs them according to his will. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of his wrath shalt thou restrain. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."*

PROOF OF THE UNIVERSAL EXTENT OF CHRIST'S DOMINION.

I. The dominion of Christ is described by terms which express its universal extent.

1. It includes all power. "And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son."† In the first place it deserves particular attention that the power spoken of is explicitly said to have been *given*. It is authority conferred upon Christ, and is therefore mediatorial. In the second place, the power given is "all power in heaven and in earth, and all judgment." This includes all mankind, without exception.

* Ps. lxxvi. 10, and cx, 2. † Matth. xxviii. 18. John v. 22.

It is a power over the wicked as well as the righteous; angels as well as men. The Mediator has "all power in heaven," as well as "in earth." The angelic hosts are subject to his authority. These scriptures I admit do not prove the universality of the Mediator's power, in the full sense of the term, but are of sufficient extent to sustain my position in this part of the argument. They prove that the dominion of Christ is not confined to the church, that it includes all wicked men and holy angels, as well as those that are redeemed from among men. Those who deny the universal extent of Christ's dominion, uniformly and without exception confine it to the church. In this view of the subject, to prove that it extends beyond the church is to determine the question. Because the whole controversy turns on this one point; is the dominion of Christ confined to the church, or is it not? If it is not, then is it universal.

2. All things are said to be subjected to Christ. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. And hath put all things under his feet. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet."*

That it is the mediatorial dominion that is described in these passages, is determined by the consideration that whatever may be its extent, it is received by Christ from the Father. It would be impossible to find language more strongly expressive of universal dominion than that which is employed in these scriptures to describe the extent of the Mediator's power. All things, whether they are things in heaven, things in earth, or

* Ps. cx. 1, Eph. i. 22, and Heb. ii. 8.

things under the earth, are all subjected to the Mediator.* “These and similar testimonies,” says a learned writer, “represent the kingdom of the Messiah as a constitution, administered pursuant to the will and appointment of the Father, by the Son of God, whose office in this respect is figuratively described by the ancient mode of expressing dignity next to that of the Sovereign himself, the being seated on the right side of the throne. These passages further declare, that its authority is supreme, and its power universal, extending to all created beings, and their operations, heavenly, earthly, and infernal; to the minds, motives and moral actions of men, to all the events of providence, and all the influences of religion, to death, and the future state.”† The force of these scriptures, as proof of the universal extent of Christ’s dominion, is very much strengthened by the non-exceptive form of one of the texts. “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all things under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.” If a doubt existed in relation to the extent of the expression “all things,” that doubt must vanish when taken in connexion with this. For if there is nothing left that is not put under him, then is his kingdom universal. This non-exceptive form of expression precludes the possibility of any limitation.

3. Christ is said to be heir of all things. “Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.” The fact that Christ is appointed to this inheritance, shows that it re-

* Phil. ii. 10.

† Testimony to the Messiah, by J. P. Smith, D. D. vol. 3, pp. 256 and 257.

fers to him as Mediator, otherwise he could not have been appointed to it; to appoint is, in this connexion, synonymous with giving, and cannot be applied to him considered as a divine person. The extent of the inheritance is defined by the expression "all things," which has been ascertained in the preceding observation to embrace the whole of creation. An heir generally is he that entereth into the right, place and title of him that is deceased, as if he were the same person, in which sense it can have no place here, but it also comprehends a possessor, a trustee, and a legatory. Nor is this title and right given to the Son as Mediator, the same with that of God, absolutely considered. This is eternal, natural, co-existent with the being of all things; that, is new, created by grant and donation; by whose creation and establishment, nevertheless, the other is not impeached. For whereas it is affirmed, that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, it respects not title and rule, but actual administration. As the term denotes any rightful possession by *grant from another*, it is properly ascribed to the Son; and there are three things intended in this word: first, title, dominion, lordship; the heir is the Lord of that which he is heir unto. Secondly, possession. Christ is made actual possessor of that which he hath title to, by the surrender, or grant of another. Thirdly, that he hath this title and possession by grant from the Father; by virtue of which grant he is made Lord by a new title, and hath possession given him accordingly. He is Lord of all things. This is the object of Messiah's heirship. The word may be taken in

the masculine gender, and denote all persons; or in the neuter, denoting absolutely all things. And it is this latter sense which suits the apostle's argument, and adds a double force to his design.”*

4. The only exception made in scripture to the dominion of Christ proves its universal extent. “For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him.”† Though there were not another text in the Bible on this subject, this alone, would be sufficient to assert the universal extent of the Mediator's dominion. The first part of the text declares that it extends over “all things.” The latter part makes an exception; but that exception is not within the confines of creation. God, alone is excepted. Every other being in the universe is included in the “all things” put under the feet of Christ. The exception displays, only more strikingly, the universal extent of his dominion.

II. The enumeration given in scripture of the several parts of the dominion of Christ prove its universal extent.

The whole creation, with its varied orders of being, rational, and irrational, animate and inanimate, are all enumerated as parts of this dominion. The parts thus specified in detail furnish a complete and unanswerable argument for the universal extent of the dominion.

1. It includes all men. “Thou hast given him power over all flesh, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

* Owen on Heb. i. 2. † 1 Cor. xv. 27.

should bow;—of things in earth. Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also that which is to come.”*

The word *all*, used in the first of these texts, might be used in a limited sense, as it sometimes is. But, in the first place, there is nothing in the context that warrants such limitation; nor is there any thing in the subject spoken of that makes it necessary. It does not oppose, but harmonize, with the views given of this subject in other parts of the scripture. In the second place, a distinction is made between the “*all flesh*” over whom power is given to the Mediator, and the “*as many*” as were “*given him*” for the purpose that he might bestow on them “*eternal life.*” The expression “*all flesh,*” as thus distinguished from those who should receive eternal life, must be taken in its most unlimited sense, as including all men, without exception. The other texts do not admit of any interpretation but one. “*A name which is above every name,*” and a homage which includes *every* knee, admit of no limitation: the word “*every*” allows of no qualification whatever.

2. Holy angels are placed under the dominion of Christ. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven. Who is gone into heaven,

* John xvii. 2. Phil. ii. 9. Eph. i. 20, 21.

and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.”* These scriptures assert in explicit terms the subjection of angels to the Mediator. They intimate to us, says Leighton, “the supreme dignity of Jesus Christ, God and man, the Mediator of the new covenant; his matchless nearness unto his Father, and the sovereignly given to him over heaven and earth. And that of the subjection of angels, is but a more particular specifying of that his dignity and power as enthroned at the Father’s right hand, they being most elevated and glorious creatures; so that his authority over all the world is implied in that subjection of the highest and noblest part of it. His victory and triumph over the angels of darkness, is an evidence of his invincible power and greatness, and matter of comfort to his saints; but this which we read of here, is his supremacy over the glorious elect angels. Jesus Christ is not only exalted above the angels in absolute dignity, but in relative authority over them.”†

3. Devils are subjected to the dominion of Christ. The apostle enumerates, as part of the all things over which Christ is exalted, “things under the earth.”‡ No satisfactory exposition can be given of this scripture, unless it is applied to the fallen angels. “Angels and men, the living and the dead,” says Doddridge in his paraphrase on the text; “yea, devils themselves shall do him homage; and he be ever adored as the Saviour of all his redeemed people, as the head of all holy and happy spirits, and the sovereign and uncontrollable

* Eph. i. 10. Phil. ii. 9, 10. 2 Pet. iii. 22.

† Leighton on 1 Pet. iii. 22. ‡ Phil. ii. 10.

Lord of all those whose rebellion against him and his heavenly Father hath made them the worthy objects of perpetual displeasure and punishment.”

When Christ was on earth, during his personal ministry he exercised dominion over apostate spirits. “And Jesus asked him saying what is thy name? And he said legion; because that many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”* In one of the visions of the apocalypse Christ is seen binding Satan, and restraining him that he should not deceive the nations. “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.”† “That the person by whom this act of power was performed was called an angel, is no objection to the application which has been made of it to Christ. For the prophet Malachi calls him the Messenger, or angel of the covenant.‡ And the Mediator alone has power to do this. No created angel has received such commission; to Christ only has the power been committed. “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell, and of death.”§ The keys of hell signify dominion over the place of the damned, and its inhabitants. A dominion claimed by Christ, when he says, “I have the keys of hell.”

4. Irrational creatures are subjected to the dominion

* Luke viii. 31.

† Rev. xx. 1, 2. ‡ Chap. iii. 1. § Rev. i. 18.

of Christ. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."* The best expositors have applied this psalm to the Lord Jesus Christ, considering it as a direct prophecy, descriptive of both his humiliation and dominion. There are strong if not insuperable objections to any other application of this portion of scripture. First, with no propriety can it be applied to Adam, for he was created immediately by God, and was not in any sense the son of man. And further, the word translated man, in the fourth verse, signifies man in his mortal condition. Now, although Adam, in his primitive state, did possess a lordship over the inferior orders of the earth, yet he lost it by sin; so that this lordship could not be predicated of him in his mortal condition. For the same reason, it cannot be applied to mankind generally: in consequence of the sin of Adam, they have lost their *right* to dominion over the inferior creatures, which are mostly in a state of war and hostility to man. Again, there is nothing in the description that may not with the utmost propriety be applied to the Messiah. In the second place, the psalm is quoted by Paul, and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ; this determines the application. "But one in a certain place tes-

* Ps. viii. 4—8.

tified, saying, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.”* Paul, speaking as he did by the Spirit, could not be mistaken in the application which he has made of it to Christ. This demonstrates the universal extent of his dominion; it includes the whole works of God, a particular specification of which is given in this psalm. “As cited in the epistle to the Hebrews, it appears to me,” says Dr. Smith, “to convey this sentiment—that the honors here declared to have been conferred upon the human race by the Creator, had never, either generally or in a single instance, been completely verified, till the man Christ Jesus was exalted, above all principality and authority, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and had all things put under his feet.”†

5. The material universe, with its laws and properties, are put in subjection to Christ. This is included in the “all things” which without exception are put under his feet; in the “works” of God, the dominion of which has been committed to him. It is implied in the dominion which the Mediator has over all rational creatures. For the lordship of Christ over men and angels and devils, implies lordship over the various parts of the material universe which they inhabit. And it is

* Heb. ii. 6, 7, 8.

† Testimony to the Messiah, vol. ii. p. 314.

asserted by the apostle: "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."*

The dominion of Christ over the material universe is taken for granted in the promises made to the people of God. "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. The sun shall not smite thee by day; nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil."† Dominion over the material creation was necessary to the fulfilment of these promises. Those who were destined to be the people of God were given to Christ; and he keeps and sustains them; and will at last present them faultless in the heavenly kingdom, saying, "Behold, I and the children which the Lord hath given me." But this presupposes his power over all the things from which he promises to defend them. Christ exercised dominion over the material world during his personal ministry. "And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose and rebuked the winds, and the sea, and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him."‡

6. Death, and hell, and the final judgment are included in the dominion of Christ. He hath "the keys of hell and death." A key is the symbol of power. "The unlimited extent of that power is expressed, with great clearness as well as force, by the sole and exclusive authority to open and shut."§ The duration of the

* 1 Cor. x. 26. † Ps. cxxi. 3-7.

‡ Matth. viii. 25-27. Luke viii. 24-25.

§ Lowth on Is. xxii. 22.

days of man is in the hand of Christ; he changeth his countenance and sendeth him away; with him is the disposal of life; for he hath the keys of death. The state of the dead, too, is under his control. The place of punishment, also, is within his dominions; even there he reigns, for he hath the keys of hell, as well as of death.

To Christ belongs the power of raising the dead, and judging the world. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which, all that are in the graves shall hear his voice. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* These scriptures show that the raising of the dead, and the final judgment are within the jurisdiction of Christ. And that when he exercises dominion over these things, it is as Mediator. For he is not only called "the Son of Man" and "that man" but he is said to be *ordained* of God to be the judge of quick and dead," which could be said of him only as mediator.

7. Society in its organized forms is subjected to Christ. He has dominion over the church. "Yet have

* John v. 25-28. Acts x. 42 and xvii. 31.

I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation.”* I wait not to prove this position, because the power of Christ over the church is not disputed; nor does it fall properly under the design of these pages. Simply to state that he is head over the church is all that is necessary in this connexion.

In the second place, civil society, and all its relations, is subjected to the dominion of Christ. This view of the authority of Christ is as distinctly stated, and more frequently referred to, in scripture, than that of his authority over the church. Civil rulers are commanded to submit themselves to Christ. “Be wise, now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”† The parties addressed in this psalm, are commanded to do homage to the Mediator, “Kiss the Son.” This figurative language, expresses according to oriental custom, the homage which nations owe, and are commanded to give to Christ. Kings and judges are the representatives of their respective nations; and when they are commanded to do homage to Christ, the command includes the nations which they represent; and the withholding of this subjects the parties to his displeasure. “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” They shall “perish from the way.”

* Ps. ii. 6. Zech. ix. 9. † Ps. ii. 10, 12.

Christ is exalted above civil rulers. “I will also *make* him my first born higher than the kings of the earth.”* That this relates to Christ does not admit of a doubt. And that it relates to his mediatorial dominion is ascertained by the consideration that it is not any original dignity that is spoken of, but something that is the subject of gift. The same idea is expressed by the apostle when he says, the Father “both raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also that which is to come.”† It is of no importance to the present argument, to inquire what is intended by the latter part of this quotation; the former asserts the exaltation of Christ above “all principality, might and dominion,” and this proves his dominion over civil society.

The subjection of the nations to Christ is foretold in prophecy: “all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.”‡ And the scriptures in direct terms assert Christ’s dominion over civil society. They call him “the Prince of the kings of the earth,” and they describe him as having “on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written King of kings, and Lord of lords.”§ It would not be easy to find language more decisively expressive of dominion over nations than that which is employed in these passages; and extremely hazardous is it to resist or evade evidence so full and decisive as that which they furnish on this subject. To meet such arguments it has been said, that though

* Ps. lxxxix. 27. † Eph. i. 20, 21. ‡ Ps. lxxii. 11.

§ Rev. i.5, and xix. 16.

the dominion of Christ is greater than the kings of the earth, yet it is not a dominion over them. I submit to the consideration of the reader, if this objection is not a direct denial of both the texts last cited. They do not say that the dominion of Christ is better, but that it is *over* the princes and kings of the earth, which indeed includes its superiority, while his dominion over nations is expressly declared, "King of kings, and Lord of lords. The Prince of the kings of the earth." And were there any ambiguity as to this, that ambiguity would be removed by such language as the following: "He is the Governor among the nations; authorities and powers being made subject unto him."*

The Saviour's own words, "my kingdom is not of this world," has been used as an objection to his dominion over civil society. This has been frequently and confidently used as an objection against not only this view of the subject, but against the universal extent of his dominion in general; but it will be for the reader, when he has perused the following remarks, to form an estimate of the fairness and success of the objection.

Christ indeed disclaimed all pretensions to the exercise of civil rule among men, when he said, "my kingdom is not of this world." But he did not say that his kingdom was not *over* this world, and all that it contains. It is the confounding of these things that has produced the objection. His kingdom is altogether different in its nature and character from the kingdoms of this world; but they may nevertheless be under his dominion and form part of its jurisdiction.

* Ps. xxii. 28. 2 Peter iii. 22.

The answer of Christ is remarkably pertinent, and deserves particular attention. The Jews entertained, about this time, very erroneous opinions respecting the promised Messiah. They misunderstood the nature of his character and work; they thought of him only as a great military chief, who by his skill and prowess would destroy the power of the Romans, and elevate the Jewish kingdom to the unrivalled pre-eminence of being queen of nations; and that, literally, he would sit on the throne, and sway the sceptre of his father David. There were exceptions, indeed, to these false notions, as in the cases of Simeon, Anna, and others, who waited for the salvation of Israel; but the general opinion was, that he would be a great conqueror and civil ruler! Even the disciples themselves were for a time under this strange delusion; and hence the request made by the mother of James and John—"that my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom."* It was this misapprehension of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, that tempted Herod to murder the children of Bethlehem. He was alarmed at the thought of a rival to the throne of David. The populace too, on one occasion, induced by the same mistaken view, were disposed to take Jesus "by force and make him a king."† The pharisees, though they did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, held the same carnal views of the kingdom and power of the Messiah. And they took advantage of this popular mistake, to accuse Christ before the Roman governor. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's

* Matth. xx. 21. † John vi. 15.

friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cesar.”* Pilate asked Christ, “Art thou the king of the Jews?” He answered, “My kingdom is not of this world.” In the sense understood by Pilate, Christ disclaimed being a king, or having a kingdom; for the Roman governor meant a civil kingdom; but at the same time admits that he is a king and has a kingdom. As if he had said, “I am indeed a king; but I claim no *civil* rule among men; I have a kingdom, but it is not a *civil* kingdom; my throne and sceptre are not those of an earthly monarch. Mine is a kingdom far different from those of this world, which are external, and compel obedience by force. My kingdom is a dominion purely moral; it is *in* this world, and *over* this world, but not *of* this world, bearing no resemblance to them in its nature or means of government.” It will now be seen, that this text gives no countenance to any disclaimiture by Christ of authority over civil society.

III. The universal extent of Christ’s dominion is proved by a consideration of his mediatorial work.

The power given to Christ is employed for the benefit of the church, which is his body. I shall establish the truth of this position in the following section; in the mean time I shall take it for granted, and draw from it an argument for the universal extent of Christ’s dominion. An ordinary degree of attention to this subject might satisfy every one, that were there a single creature opposed to the salvation of sinners, and such creature not under the control of the Mediator, their salvation would be uncertain; such a state of things might

* John xix. 12.

produce contingencies which he could neither obviate nor control. It does not remove this difficulty, to say, that the divine power of Christ is adequate to the work of salvation. So it is. And infinitely more than adequate. But if this refuge is sought, to escape the difficulty, then salvation is referred to the son of God, irrespective of his mediatorial relation, which is equivalent to a denial of his mediatorial work. The Mediator is a divine person, and therefore possesses power infinitely more than competent to the work of salvation; but as Mediator he receives authority to employ this power for the salvation of sinners. And it is necessary that the authority conferred should be equal to the demands of the work; which is saying in other words only, that the dominion of Christ is universal. For if there was one creature an exception to the universal extent of his dominion, that exception might be an insuperable obstacle to the authority of the Mediator, and of course to the completion of his work. The Redeemer himself recognizes this, when he says respecting his people, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." The reason why none of them can be plucked out of his hand is, that he possesses power adequate to the work of preserving them in a state of safety; and has received authority to employ it for this mediatorial purpose. Did he not possess such authority as mediator, he could not have said, "neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."* None of the sheep of Christ shall ever perish. But they are kept by Christ in the exercise of mediato-

* John x. 28.

rial authority; that authority therefore is as extensive as the *any* who might attempt to pluck them out of his hand. "I am persuaded," says the apostle, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* The dominion of Christ must at least extend over all these persons and things enumerated by the apostle; otherwise there could not be any persuasion of security. "The possession of this universal dominion is plainly necessary to the Mediator," says the eloquent Marcus Dodds, "For if there exists in the universe some power or influence which he cannot control and direct at his pleasure, then it is clear that he can give no absolute assurance of salvation; because that power may become adverse to our salvation; and Christ being unable to control or direct it—having no dominion over it—cannot accomplish his gracious design toward us. The possession, then, of all power and authority, over all things visible and invisible, must of plain necessity be in the Saviour."†

The following remarks will illustrate more fully the argument which has now been presented to the reader.

1. All the redeemed are by nature ungodly. Like other men, they are children of wrath; not one of them belongs originally to the kingdom of grace. To bring them into this new condition Christ must have had authority over them while in their natural state. It is this authority which gave him a right to pluck them as brands out of the burning; to take them from their state of na-

* Rom. viii. 38, 39. † Incarnation of the eternal Word.

ture, and bring them into the state of grace. Otherwise, any exercise of authority over them would have been an intrusion into a jurisdiction not embraced in the mediatorial charter. The dominion of Christ must necessarily extend beyond the church, or a church never could have been formed in the world. Adam and Eve were brought out of a state of sin and misery, and organized into a church state, by Christ; and this fact presupposes the possession of power. And the same power is exercised by Christ in the case of every sinner effectually called by the grace of God. Though now *in* the kingdom of grace, he was originally *in* the world lying in sin and wickedness—a subject of the kingdom of darkness. It is evident, then, that the authority by which the transference is made, extends over the world lying in sin—that kingdom of darkness from which he has been taken—as well as that kingdom of grace into which he has been brought.

2. The people of God need to be preserved from the corrupting influence of sinners around them in the world. Though saints, they are not perfect; they are therefore liable to temptation; and were they not kept by Christ, must indeed fall finally away. This danger is intimated by the Saviour; “For,” says he, “there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”*

3. The people of God are exposed to the assaults of Satan. “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour.”† The

* Matth. xxiv. 24. † 1 Pet. v. 8.

preservation of the saints from these assaults is secured by the power of Christ. "A messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me," says Paul; "for this I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* In the protection which the Mediator thus promised, there is included an authority over Satan. The answer is a promise of security; and the fulfilment of the promise proves the dominion of Christ over Satan. Were the authority of Christ confined to the church, the "roaring lion" of hell could not be resisted by mediatorial power; nor could the promise of security ever be realized.

4. The saints of God are exposed to injuries from inferior creatures—from the elements of nature, and the operations of its ordinary laws. Their preservation and safe-keeping from external danger, requires that their Saviour should have power over all these, to control and direct them, so that the purposes of God in respect of his people may be accomplished. For example, when Jonah was cast into the sea by the mariners of Tarshish, he would have perished in the sea, or been destroyed by the monster of the deep by which he was swallowed, if the voracious animal had not been restrained, and finally taught by the Lord to disgorge its prey, and cast him forth on dry land. The element of fire must have consumed the three children, when they were cast into the furnace, by the order of the king of Babylon, had not its power been restrained, and its natural operation suspended. And the disciples on the

* 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

sea of Galilee must have perished, had not Christ rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water.

In conclusion, the reader is requested carefully to review the mass of evidence which has been offered, in proof of the universal external extent of Christ's dominion; whether the propositions contained in the several arguments have not been sustained by the most irrefragible and abundant scripture testimony; whether the nature of the work given him to perform, did not make it absolutely necessary that Christ, as Mediator, should have a universal dominion. Irrespective of direct testimony, is there not a strong presumption—a presumption amounting to moral certainty—that the Mediator should be thus endowed? A system originated by infinite wisdom, carries evidence with it, that every power necessary to the accomplishment of the system would be imparted to the person authorized to carry it into effect!

The dominion of Christ is described by terms that express its universal extent. "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.—Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For, in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.—Whom he hath appointed heir of all things." And indeed the exception made to his dominion strengthens the argument.—For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him."

Dominion over all the parts of created existence is ascribed to Christ. "Thou hast given him power over all

flesh.—Set him at his own right hand, far above every name that is named in this world.—And given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things on earth.—And of things in heaven.—Angels, and authorities and powers being made subject to him.—And things under the earth.—And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.—Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.—What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?—He hath the keys of hell and death.—He who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.—Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.—I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth.—Raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also that which is to come.—He is Prince of the kings of the earth,—King of kings and Lord of lords.—And the Governor among the nations.”

SECTION III.

THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH DOMINION IS DE-
LEGATED TO CHRIST.

The Lord Jesus Christ has obtained authority to exercise universal dominion, as the reward of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But it is not inconsistent with this idea, that it should have been designed also as a means of securing certain specified purposes. He rules over all things, “making them, and their changes, counsels, and efforts, subservient to the manifestation of God’s glory in the system of redemption.”* “Christ executeth the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to himself, and giving them officers, laws and censors, by which he visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon his elect, rewarding their obedience and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all things for his own glory and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.”†

The dominion of Christ is exercised for the benefit of the church—the whole elect of God. All who were to be saved by his suffering were given to him in the co-

* Reformation Principles, p. 77. † Larger Catechism, p. 45.

venant of redemption, that he might suffer and obey the law in their place; at the same time universal dominion was given him, that he might carry into effect the designs of the covenant. "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church."* The last of these texts is a most explicit declaration that the dominion of Christ is not confined to the church, but embraces "all things;" and also that it is exercised for the benefit of the church. As the apostle in the preceding verse hath described Christ's dominion over angels and men, the all things in this verse may be the material fabric of the world, together with the brute creation, mentioned in the eighth psalm as subjected to Christ. As it is here declared that Christ is raised to universal dominion, for the noble purpose of erecting and establishing the church—it was necessary for accomplishing this grand purpose, that the evil angels should be subjected to him; and even that the material fabric of the world, with every thing it contains, should be under his direction, that he may order all the events befalling men, in such a manner as to promote their virtue, and prepare them for heaven."†

I. Christ possesses dominion, that he may give practical efficacy to his atonement.

Men are by nature guilty and depraved, "dead in trespasses and sins." It is the will of God that sinners should be saved by the obedience and sufferings of the

* John xvii. 2. Eph. i. 22. † Macknight on the place.

Lord Jesus Christ in their place. Such as were designed of God to be made partakers of redemption, were for this purpose "chosen in him before the foundation of the world." In the fulness of time, the Son of God, by his obedience and sufferings in our nature, made satisfaction for all the sins of all those who were chosen in him, and given to him in the covenant of peace. A complete atonement was thus made for their guilt. This needs to be applied; for without an application of the atonement no sinner could be a partaker of salvation. Hence the necessity of the kingly office of Christ—that he should be a king as well as a priest; that the value of what he did as a priest might be applied by him as a king. Therefore, saith the apostle Peter, "Him hath God highly exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins."*

1. He subdues sinners to himself. The obedience of Christ magnified the law and made it honorable; by it he "spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." But the magnifying of the law, and the triumph of Christ over the powers of darkness, produces no change in the sinner, till it is applied to him by the power of Christ, reigning in him and over him, as king. In view of this, the Father says to Christ, in the hundred and tenth psalm, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The effect of this exercise of power is, the sinner is subdued, and brought into the obedience of faith. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

* Acts v. 31.

The enmity of the sinner's heart is taken away, and the obduracy of his will is subdued; he is no longer stubborn and high-minded, but obedient and submissive. Christ not only invites sinners to come unto him, "that they may have life; he draws them effectually by his grace, delivering them from the power of Satan, and from the kingdom of darkness.

2. Christ subdues sinners by the agency of the Holy Spirit. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him to you. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."* The Spirit of God takes the things of Christ, and by these he enlightens the understandings of sinners, and renews them also in the spirit of their minds. They are "born again." "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."† Thus the Lord Jesus goes forth conquering, "great in might and strong in battle." For this purpose he has been made "both Lord and Christ".—A prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins."

* John xvi. 7, and xvi. 13, 14. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

3. Christ subdues sinners through the means of the gospel. It is a system of means, designed to promote this end. As a system of means, it is adapted with infinite wisdom to the attainment of this; it is indeed the "wisdom and the power of God." It possesses a moral adaptation which fits it as a means to the end proposed; but it possesses this appropriate character, however, only as a medium; yet, in itself it has nothing more than the power of moral suasion, and is made effectual by the power of Christ who employs it as the means by which he exerts his authority in the hearts of sinners.

The revelation of the will of God in the gospel, is an exercise of the prophetic office, by which Christ reveals, by the agency of the Spirit, "the will of God for our salvation." While, however, the revelation of the gospel is a prophetic act, the power necessary to make it effectual is an act of kingly authority. The simple revelation of the will of God makes men acquainted with the truth; but the truth must be applied; and it is this application which gives it the character of being "the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." By his word and Spirit Christ rules in the midst of his enemies.

II. Christ possesses dominion, that he may institute ordinances in the church.

To the Lord Jesus Christ, the only king of Zion, belongs the prerogative of instituting ordinances; "he alone has a right to appoint ordinances and officers, and to establish laws, as the king and head of his church."*

1. Christ has instituted the public preaching of the

* Ref. Prin. p.76.

gospel. He has appointed this as the means of bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of salvation, through faith in his righteousness, and for building up in holiness such as have already been taught to know Christ and him crucified. As the appointment of Christ, it is called "the rod of his strength.—The power of God unto salvation." When the Redeemer appointed the public preaching of the gospel under the New Testament dispensation, he asserted in connection with the appointment, his right to universal dominion; thus showing to the disciples that the appointment flowed from his official dominion. "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.—Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*

2. He appoints worship, and appropriates the time for its public ministration. The institution of public worship supposes the appropriation of time for attending to it. The sabbath, which had originally been appointed as a commemoration of the work of creation, and for celebrating the glory of the Creator, is now appropriated by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to commemorate his resurrection from the dead, to celebrate the glory of redeeming love, and for the ministry of public ordinances, that believers may be instructed and comforted, and that sinners may be converted, and made willing in the day of power.

* Matth. xxviii. 19. Luke xxiv 47.

The appropriation of the first day of the week is indicated with sufficient plainness by the fact that the apostles and primitive Christians always assembled on that day for worship. A fact thus sustained by the example of the apostles, is of equal authority with an explicit appointment.

The public preaching of the gospel, as appointed by Christ, forms an important part of the worship of the sabbath. It was so under the Old Testament dispensation. The knowledge of salvation was taught in the Jewish synagogues when they met on the sabbath for worship.* After the ascension of Christ, the apostles preached on the first day of the week, when the people met for worship. "And upon the first day of the week when the apostles came to break bread, Paul preached unto them. And the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next sabbath."†

Public worship includes prayer and praise, as well as the preaching of the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ has therefore provided the church with a book of psalmody, and commanded her to use it in her devotional services. "Praise ye the Lord, sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king."‡ He also commands prayer. "Pray without ceasing. Trust ye in him at all times, ye people, pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us."§

Private social worship has a place in the ordinances

* Luke iv. 16. Acts xiii. 27. † Acts xxviii. 7, and xiii. 42.

‡ Ps. cxlix. 1, 2. § 1 Thess. v. 17. Ps. lxii. 8.

of Christ. "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* That these scriptures refer to private social worship is evident from the duties to be performed, namely, "exhorting one another, speaking often to one another, and teaching one another;" duties which are incompatible with public worship, and which require the private meetings of the people of God.

Domestic and personal worship, too, are appointed by Christ. That families may "shew forth the loving kindness of the Lord in the morning, and his faithfulness every night," and do like Joshua, "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."†

3. Christ has instituted the seals of the covenant. During the former dispensation they were circumcision and the passover. In room of these, he has now appointed baptism and the Lord's supper. "Go," said he to the apostles, "and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when

* Heb. x. 25. Mal. iii. 16. Col. iii. 16.

† Ps. xcii. 2. Joshua xxiv. 15.

he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

4. He has appointed officers in his house. The officers of the New Testament church are first ministers of the word, who rule also as well as labor in word and doctrine; secondly, presbyters or elders who rule only, and deacons, whose function is to manage “the temporalities of the church.”†

5. Christ has appointed government in the church. He has not left this to be determined by circumstances, or by caprice. “Christ, the head and lawgiver, has appointed in his word, a particular form of government for the New Testament church, distinct from the government of the nations in which Christians live.”‡ The apostles were solemnly invested with ministerial power of government by Christ, when he said, “I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” And Christians are charged to submit to this government. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”§

This government is alike removed, on the one hand, from episcopal domination, and on the other, from an absurd and unscriptural attempt to lodge it in the hands of all the faithful. Presbyterian government,

* Matth. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xi. 23, 26.

† Ref. Prin. p. 88. ‡ Ref. Prin. § Heb. xiii. 17.

the system instituted by Christ, is an exemplification of the scriptural principle of representation. The members of the church choose their own rulers, and these enjoy an entire parity of power in the exercise of government.

When Christ commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel, and gave them the power of government, he authorized them to settle the order of the church, and make provision for the continuance of Christian ordinances. According to the apostolical order, a presbytery of elders have the power of ordination, and to the people belong the right of choosing their own officers, whether to minister in word and doctrine, to exercise government, or manage its temporalities. To judge of the qualifications of such as are to be admitted into membership, or into office in the church, belongs to her lawfully constituted rulers, assembled in parochial, or presbyterial session.

The church, as such, is absolutely independent of all civil power. Any interference on the part of the state to direct the worship, determine the doctrines, control the deliberations or decisions of the church, to specify the qualifications of her officers, or the terms of membership, is an undue and sinful connexion of the church with the state. It is an Erastian encroachment on the royal prerogatives of Jesus, who *alone is Lord of the church*. And who has given to her authority to exercise all government and discipline necessary to her maintenance and prosperity. This authority she exercises on the principle of representation, by her lawfully ordained ecclesiastical officers. The sole right of go-

vernment and ordination assumed by Episcopal bishops is an intrusion upon the lordship of Christ who has given to the eldership of the church "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," an invasion upon the liberties of the church, and a dangerous consolidation of power at variance with her best interests.

III. Christ has received dominion that he may preserve and protect the church.

The church has in all ages been, and still is exposed to numerous enemies and dangers. The doctrines and testimony of the church with their practical influence on her character; and her aims and destination are all so directly opposed to the world that she is the object of its most malignant hatred. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,"* said Christ to his disciples.

The combined power of wicked men and devils is employed to break down the church. Infidelity and the various systems of false religion,—pagan and Mahometan, with Socinianism, popery, and other corruptions of Christianity, are just so many devices of Satan to overturn the church, and defeat the salvation of sinners, the great object of establishing her in the world. The persecutions too, which have been waged against her by pagan, popish, and prelatical power,—and the scorn and reproach still cast upon true religion and its professors are designed to produce the same effect. To these may be added the temptations by which Satan

* John xv. 19.

strives to draw away men from the belief and practice of the truth as it is in Jesus. The church though comparatively small has nevertheless been preserved from destruction. Surrounded though she is by enemies, she is still safe! Anchored on the promise—the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,—she has weathered every storm; and rides in perfect security, guided and defended by him who controls the wrath of man, and restrains the elements of nature. The false systems of religion by which “the enemy comes in like a flood,” and all their evil influences are doomed to destruction; the devil that old serpent shall be bound in chains; and the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. The church is perfectly secure in the protection of her exalted head. “O Israel fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.” The members of the church individually, have the same security of protection from the assaults of Satan. “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

IV. Christ possesses dominion that he may bestow spiritual blessings on the church.

As her exalted head spiritual blessings have been given to Christ, with authority to dispense them for her edification. “For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* He blesses the faithful administration of ordinances;

* Col. i. 19. Eph. i. 3.

whether the ministry of the word, the seals of the covenant, or the exercise of government and discipline. For says the apostle "he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

The work of sanctification which is begun when they are converted, is advanced and enlarged. For, "the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And he that hath clean hands shall become stronger and stronger." They grow in knowledge, and they grow in holiness.

Christ bestows upon his people grace to perform duty, and resist temptation. So that the believer is taught to say "Though I walk in the midst of trouble thou wilt revive me, thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."† Christ bestows upon the church comfort. "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. These things have I spoken unto you that ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."‡ Painful and trying indeed, is the lot of God's people often in the world; but their enjoyments also abound. As their day is, so is their strength, and consequent joy. "The kingdom of

* Eph. iv. 11, 12. † Ps. cxxxviii. 7. Phil. iv. 13

‡ John xiv. 1, and xvi. 33.

God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The saints “rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” By these consolations of the gospel, the hearts of believers are made glad: and they are sustained in the time of trial. Thus, he makes them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and finally brings them into its enjoyment. “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”

V. Christ possesses dominion, that he may provide his people with temporal support.

1. Before I proceed to the illustration of this point, I deem it sufficiently important to state, that this is not a question respecting the possession of temporal good things; but the *right* to possess them. Wicked men possess these things as well as God’s people; and, in many instances in far greater abundance. Indeed this might be admitted, as almost universal; for “hath not God chosen the poor of this world” to be “heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?” The *possession* of temporal good things must be distinguished, however, from the *right* to possess them: the right is one thing, and the possession is another; wicked men may have the latter, the former they cannot have, the latter is an enjoyment common to men irrespective of character, but the former is peculiar to the saints of God.

2. The right to enjoy such things as are necessary to the maintenance of natural life, was lost by the fall of man. It was possessed in a state of innocence; man received it from the Creator with the gift of life itself.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth on the earth. And God said behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which there is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.”* The right, which God thus conferred upon man was afterwards cancelled in consequence of his transgression against God. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”† Man has therefore, now, no right to enjoy any thing necessary to the maintenance of natural life. Such things he may possess; but he possesses them under the curse!

Sin has introduced death into the world, because it is a violation of the covenant which God made with man at his creation. “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”‡ The fact, that death was inflicted in consequence of sin is asserted by the apostle. “Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”§ Whatever diversity of opinion may exist among expositors of scripture, as to the precise extent of the term death; it is universally admitted that it includes natural death, the dissolution

* Gen. i. 27—29. † Gen. iii. 17

‡ Gen. ii. 17. § Romans v. 12.

of the connexion between soul and body. This exposition is so unequivocally expressed by the apostle, in the context that it cannot be denied. The establishment of the fact that natural death is part of the wages of sin, shows very clearly that man has lost all right to the things of this life. The forfeiture of this right was part of the penalty of the covenant of works, and the transgression of the covenant was immediately followed by the infliction of the forfeiture. The whole world lying in sin is under the sentence of death; "the wrath of God abided on them." It necessarily follows that the right to life being forfeited, the right to the means of life, is also forfeited. For it is not to be imagined that the sinner should *retain* the right to the means of supporting life, while the right to life itself was lost.

That God in part suspends the execution of the sentence for a time is true; but this does not give the sinner any right to life during the period of suspension; and of course does not give any right to the means of supporting life. A respite of punishment supposes the power of immediate infliction, but it cannot restore any lost right, nor confer any new right. The continued possession of life by the sinner is mere sufferance on the part of God. He permits the sinner to live, but this does not cancel the merited punishment; it only stays proceedings, which may be resumed on the claim of justice at any time infinite wisdom may think fit. The suspension of punishment, is not the effect of caprice, but the dictate of wisdom. The reason why our sinful world is still preserved, and the wrath of God partly suspended is for the sake of the elect.

God designed to save a part of the fallen family of Adam, and restore them to a state of friendship with himself, "according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus." There is no reason to suppose that the world would have stood and the successive generations of men appeared in it, if there had been no redemption provided for any of mankind. This question is not to be settled by mere general reasoning that it is necessary that the world should stand in order to bring into being the children of Adam, that they might be punished by the curse of the covenant of works. It ill becomes man indeed to say what *ought to be*, or what *must be* in the government of God. The question is settled by the plainest statements of scripture, and these, are not to be set aside by any reasoning of man, respecting the supposed necessity of things. The world stands, as it is, for the sake of the elect, and only for their sake. "Ye are the salt of the earth," said Jesus to his disciples.

The exposition which the Saviour gives of the parable of the tares and the wheat, illustrates in the most convincing manner, that the world stands and is preserved for the sake of the saints, the elect of God. "The kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field, but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them,

an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also with them." The disciples said unto him, "declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, he that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom, all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."* Thus the tares are allowed to grow in the field for the sake of the wheat; so a wicked world is continued in existence for the sake of the church which is in it; for the tares are the wicked and the wheat are the righteous; and for their sake alone is the world preserved. The continuance of the world, says Turretine, depends upon the preservation of the church. For no other reason is the world preserved, than, that the elect of which the church is composed may be gathered out of it." Nor do the children of God, says Witsius, "exceed the bounds of decency, when they think that

* Matth. xiii. 24—43.

the world remains in its present state on their account, and that the wicked are indebted to them for this; for the holy seed is the substance of the world.”*

3. The Lord Jesus Christ has earned a right by his obedience unto death, in the place of the elect, to dispense as well temporal, as spiritual blessings. Man had lost the right to the enjoyment of both by sin. The lost right is recovered by the righteousness of Christ who “restored what he took not away.” He redeemed his elect from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them; having bought them with his own blood. Thus in him their covenant head, the saints have a right to the life that now is, and that which is to come. Both rest on the foundation of his perfect obedience. When Christ redeemed the elect, he redeemed at the same time, and by the same means, the whole mortgaged inheritance; whatever they lost by sin he restored. He redeemed them from death, and secured for them a right to the means of life. The curse is removed. That curse which was pronounced upon the ground, and whatever it produced for the use of man is taken away as far as the elect are concerned. It is revolting to Christian piety to entertain, for a single moment the thought that the people of God eat their daily bread; or enjoy any of the necessities of life under the primeval curse! It is impossible. Their redemption is complete; they are blessed, as well in their “basket and store,” as with “all spiritual blessings.” They have a new-covenant right to the things

* Turretine, vol. 3, quest. 8, 7. Witsius’ Economy of the covenants on the article adoption.

of this life food and raiment. The promise made to Christ in the covenant is “he shall see his seed, he shall prolong *their* days.”* To prolong the days of the elect includes in it every thing necessary as means: the promise, secures not only the end, but that by which the end is to be obtained. The promise secures eternal life, with all the spiritual blessings necessary to prepare the elect for its enjoyment: but it includes also whatever is necessary to support their bodies, while it is the will of God to keep them in this world. When God introduced Adam into the habitable earth he constituted him lord of the world, and gave him a right and claim to use the rest of the creatures for his own advantage. But Adam by his sin lost that right; so that neither himself nor any of his posterity, while in a state of sin have any true and spiritual right, which can stand in the court of heaven to touch any creature. But Christ has made a new purchase of it for himself and his brethren. Whence “all things are yours;” and among these all things, the world is mentioned, and whatever is in it, “things present and things to come.” For, adds the apostle “ye are Christ’s”† Spiritual blessings are not more necessary to meet the wants of a believer’s soul, than are food and raiment to feed and clothe his body while on earth. The former are indeed of more importance, as much more important as the soul is of more value than the body: yet, the latter are as necessary in its own place as the former. Both soul and body require the means of sustentation adapted to

* See Lowth’s translation of Is. liii. 10.

† Witsius’ Economy of the Covenant,—article, Adoption.

their different wants. The bread and the water promised to believers, are as necessary in their place, to meet the daily returning wants of the body; as sanctification, faith, hope, and spiritual joy are to the soul. The crown of glory, is of more absolute value, but not more necessary, than are the means of sustaining natural life to his people, while God has work for them on earth.

That Christ might have authority to dispense temporal good things to his people, he obtained dominion over all things in the world. He was made Lord over all things for the good of the church which is his body. Christ exercises this dominion which he has won by his perfect obedience so that his people have a sanctified use, as well as a new covenant right to their temporal enjoyments. "And hence we learn the way of obtaining a sanctified interest in, and a right use of all created things; namely, not to receive them on the general account as made by the Son of God, but on the more special account of their being granted to him as Mediator of the church, God would hereby instruct us in the use and improvement we are to make of his creatures to his glory; for it is his will that we should not use any thing as merely made by him, seeing, as they are now in fact so left, they are under the curse and therefore are impure and unclean to them that use them; but he would have us look upon them and receive them as given over to Christ. For the apostle in his application of the eighth psalm to the Lord Messiah manifests that even the beasts of the field on which we live, are transferred in a particular manner to his

dominion; and he lays our interest in them as to a clear, profitable and sanctified use, in the new state of things brought in by Christ.”* The dominion which Christ has obtained over all things, gives him a right to dispose of them for the good of the church. To him have they been committed for this purpose; he gives them to his people on the ground of new-covenant right, and his blessing with them.

Having now disposed of these preliminary points, first, that sinners have no right to the enjoyment of temporal good things, and secondly, that Christ has earned a right to dispose of them, I proceed to prove that the people of God obtain a right to use them, in virtue of the mediation of Christ—that they are as truly a part of the purchase of Christ, as the most exalted spiritual blessings are.

The reader will bear in mind that I speak of the right to use temporal good things, and not of the matter of these things. Inattention to this plain distinction has very much embarrassed the subject under consideration. It is thought by some persons that it is degrading to the work of Christ, to suppose that he died to purchase the common necessities of life for man. That which creates the difficulty in the minds of such persons is, that they do not distinguish between “the right to use” the necessities of life, and “the matter” of which they consist. The matter of these necessities exist in the common providence of God, but the *right to use* them flows from the mediation and purchase of Christ. He purchased for his people tem-

* Owen on Heb. i. 2.

poral good things, in the same sense which it is said that he purchased for them spiritual blessings. The former as well as the latter, is part of the "purchased inheritance." He redeemed the whole elect of God; and for them a "right to the life that now is, and that which is to come."

1. Scripture asserts the superiority of the temporal enjoyments of the righteous over those of the wicked. "Better is little with righteousness, than great revenues without right. A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*

The superiority expressed in these texts is not in the things themselves; those possessed by the wicked are in themselves as good as those enjoyed by the righteous; for "every creature of God is good." Nor does the betterness consist in the greater amount possessed, because it is expressly said that the *little* which a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked, or the *much* riches of the wicked. The superiority does not then arise from the difference of amount, for the smaller portion of the righteous is better than the larger portion of the wicked.

The superiority consists in two things. First, in a new-covenant right which the people of God have to these things, and which unbelievers have not. There can be no right to enjoy any thing whether temporal or spiritual otherwise than through this relation. "He hath given meat to them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant."†

In the second place, believers have a sanctified use

* Prov. xvi. 8. Ps. xxxvii. 16. † Ps. iii. 5.

of temporal good things. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. And to be received with thanksgiving of them that believe and know the truth."* It is obvious that while these things are absolutely good as the creatures of God their relative goodness to those who possess them arises from the fact of their being "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," and being received with thanksgiving and faith. The sanctified use is connected with the exercise of faith; but every act of faith has respect to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the promises of the new covenant. It is repugnant to every scriptural idea of the gospel to suppose that a man can have a sanctified use of anything that is not included in the covenant of mercy; or that he can exercise faith in relation to anything that is not provided for in that covenant. Faith itself is provided for in the covenant, and is a "fruit of the Spirit," in them that are saved; and can be exercised only by one who is brought within the bonds of the covenant. It is the fact that a man has a new-covenant right to the things of this life, and receives them by faith, that makes "the little" he may have "better" than the "much riches of the wicked. Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."†

2. Believers are taught to ask for temporal good things. "After this manner therefore, pray ye, give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,

* 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5, 3.

† Tit. i. 15.

as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* First, in this form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, our “daily bread” is put into the same category with spiritual blessings, the pardon of sin, deliverance from temptation, and all evil. This furnishes a strong presumption that the believer obtains his “daily bread” on the same footing that he obtains pardon of sin, or is kept from temptation and delivered from evil. In the second place prayer is acceptable only when presented in the name of Christ, and in faith of his righteousness. There can be no access to God in any other way. “No man cometh unto the Father but by me,” and “the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.”† Now as Christ taught his disciples to pray for their “daily bread” and that too in the same connexion with spiritual blessings, and as all acceptable prayer flows from faith in the righteousness of Christ, then certainly believers receive the answer of their prayers on account of this righteousness. Whatever is asked for in the name of Christ is obtained only for his sake. Prayer in the name of Christ is a new-covenant medium for receiving new-covenant blessings. If man had a natural right to obtain anything from God there would of course be a natural medium of receiving it; but there is no such medium, for “no man cometh unto the Father but by me” is the language of Christ himself. And again “verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will

* Matth. vi. 9, 11, 12, 13.

† John xiv. 6. Prov. xv. 26.

give it you.”* The fact that scripture points out a new-covenant medium of seeking our “daily bread” from God, shows that it is a new-covenant blessing obtained on the footing of a new-covenant right.

I am aware that some who deny this conclusion have endeavored to evade the force of the argument by adopting what is admitted to be at least a *consistent* course, they ask for temporal good things from God as the God of nature, irrespective of the Redeemer! This is consistent; for if the right to these is not obtained through the mediation of Christ, then surely there is no need of using the Mediator as the medium of obtaining them. But while it merits the meed of consistency, it is grossly impious. What! A poor sinful creature dares to approach the throne of the Eternal, in prayer, irrespective of the Mediator! This is a far more daring sin than that of Nadab and Abihu, who offered strange fire unto the Lord and were consumed.† In this case there was a practical rejection of the appointed typical medium of approach to God; in the other, there is a practical rejection of what was represented by the type—the Lord Jesus Christ himself. An opinion must be far from the truth indeed which leads to such sinful and extravagant conduct!

3. Temporal good things are promised in scripture to the saints.

Of all the promises made in the Bible on this subject there is not one made to man simply as such; they are all of them made in connexion with a certain character, or relationship. Personal character does not

* John xvi. 23. † Lev. x. 1, 2.

indeed confer, but it describes and points out who possesses the right. And in doing this, it proves that the saints only possess it.

“He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given to him, his waters shall be sure.” Here is a promise, but mark the character of the man to whom the promise is made. “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, and shaketh his hands from holding of bribes that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.*—Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”† Faith and practical godliness constitute the character of the man to whom this promise is made. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”‡ In the first place this promise is made to such as possess “Godliness.” In the second, it includes the present life as well as that which is to come. As well “things present, as things to come.” For “all things are yours,” said Paul to the believing Corinthians. “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.§—But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.”|| The “need” for which a supply is promised in this scripture, is the want of the things of this life,

* Is. xxxiii. 15, 16. † Ps. xxxvii. 3. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

§ 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. || Phil. iv. 19.

as is evident from the context. The occasion of introducing this subject was the liberality of the Philippians to the apostle. "Now ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me, as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound. I am full, having received of Epaphroditus, the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing unto God." And then is added to the promise, "my God shall supply all your need." It is thus evident, that the need spoken of in the promise is of the same kind with the apostle's necessity which the Philippians had supplied by the well-timed "gift," which "once and again they had sent to him while at Thessalonica. Having shown their Christian liberality to him he comforts them with the important gospel truth, that God would "supply all their need." And the rule by which God acts in this case is "according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." This shows that the supply for the believer's temporal need is provided for in the covenant kindness of God through Christ Jesus. "Take no thought," says the Saviour, "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* All the promises made in the scrip-

* Matth. vi. 25, 33.

ture of the good things of this life, are made in connexion with Christian character, or the relation of being in the kingdom of God. And this view of such promises is still further strengthened by the consideration that all the promises of the gospel are “yea and amen” in Christ Jesus. It contains not a single promise that is not secured on the foundation of his mediation with God. Thus the promise of temporal good things made to believers in the gospel demonstrates that the right to enjoy them is a new-covenant privilege, and as such are dispensed by the Lord Jesus Christ who is “heir of all things.”

VI. Christ possesses dominion that he may employ the ministry of angels for the good of the church.

For this purpose, angels have been put under the subjection of Christ. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*” The fact of their ministration is thus asserted in scripture, and the history of the church furnishes a number of recorded instances where they have been employed in the most beneficent and important services to the people of God. The Mediator showing thus the high regard which he has to his people by sending in his providence angelic aid when otherwise they might have suffered loss; and though we have not the means of knowing when, and how, these holy creatures are employed in the service of the church and its members, there can be no doubt that they are still as really and truly employed as ever they were in any former age. A reference to some scriptural facts will present the best

* Heb. i. 14.

illustration of this subject. One of the most remarkable of these is found in the history of Lot. God had determined to destroy the city of Sodom in which Lot dwelt because of the sins of its inhabitants. But this man of God and his family are to be preserved from the doom of this atrociously guilty city; angels therefore are sent to warn him of his danger and aid him in his flight. Hence, "while he lingered, the" (angels in the appearance of) "men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him without the city."* The history of Elisha presents another remarkable instance of angelic ministration. Elisha having discovered to the king of Israel several designs which the king of Syria had formed for attacking him and thus disconcerted his plans, the king of Syria determined to avenge himself on the venerable prophet, and sent a large armed host to the city of Dothan, where the prophet dwelt, with the design of making him a prisoner. "When the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots; and his servant said unto him, alas, my master, what shall we do? And he answered, fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see; and the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."† Persecuted by the malignity of

* Gen. xix. 16. † 2 Kings vi. 15—17.

Herod, the apostle Peter was cast into prison and closely secured between two soldiers. "And behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, arise up quickly; and his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said, gird thyself and bind on thy sandals; and so he did. And he said unto him, cast thy garment about thee and follow me. And he went out and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."*

The ministry of an angel was employed to make known to the apostle John "the revelation of Jesus Christ," This he sent "by his angel unto his servant John."† It is vastly encouraging to the people of God to know that all the means furnished by the whole universe are at the disposal of Christ, and are employed by him in their behalf as their needs require—that angels, though far more exalted than man in dignity of nature, are yet made subservient to the good of the church, as the ministers of Christ, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

VII. Christ possesses dominion that he may restrain the enemies of the church.

The enemies of the church include all wicked men and devils. They are exceedingly numerous. By far the greater part of men are opposed to the church, and

* Acts xii. 7—11.

† Rev. i, 1.

manifest the strongest enmity to her. They with the hosts of apostate angels, are banded together by the most deadly hatred against the church and her interests, and the prosperity of her members. The hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord; not only the hearts of believers who have been renewed and sanctified by his spirit, and who take pleasure in his commandments, but the hearts of all men universally, the evil as well as the good. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou?"* The passions, schemes, and actions of men he overrules and controls so as to promote and carry on his government the immediate object of which is the good of the church. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." The illustration of this forms a remarkable feature in the providence of the Mediator. It is the subject of no ordinary delight to an intelligent believer to observe in the history of the past such a direction given to great and important events so as to promote the interests of the church, restrain and confound her enemies. Nor is it the less interesting to believers to know that the subordinate actors in these events have no such designs in view. "Where a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh all his enemies to be at peace with him."†

Devils also are restrained in their malicious purposes against the church and the people of God. This is illustrated by the binding of Satan by the Mediator, "that he should deceive the nations no more."‡ And

* Dan. iv. 35. † Prov. xvi. 7. ‡ Rev. xx. 3.

it is guaranteed in the promise of Christ that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* The gate of the city was among the ancients the place of judgment, where the elders or rulers met to dispense justice and deliberate in council; it was also the place of power, where the armory, the defence of the city was kept. Thus, according to the promise of Christ, neither the determinations, the councils, nor the power of the devil, united with other apostate spirits and wicked men, shall be able to prevail against the church of God. No, not even death; because Christ hath vanquished death and “him that had the power of death, that is the devil.”† This protection the church has enjoyed, and shall continue to enjoy till all the redeemed of God be brought to glory, when every enemy shall be entirely destroyed.

The restraining of devils was exemplified by the Saviour during his ministry on earth. He cast devils out of men and women, and made them acknowledge his power over them—“art thou come to torment us before the time?”

VIII. Christ possesses power that he may raise the dead, and adjudicate the final condition of men and devils.

In the exercise of his mediatorial dominion he shall raise the dead. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is

* Matth. xvi. 18.

† Heb. ii. 14.

the Son of Man. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”* Those of the children of men who shall be on the earth at the last day shall be changed by the power of Christ; their bodies shall undergo a change similar to that produced by the resurrection in the case of such as have slept in the dust. “We shall not all sleep,” says the apostle, “but we shall all be changed. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God.”† He shall assemble before him all intelligent creatures, and separating the righteous from the wicked he shall adjudicate their final condition. “When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire

* John v. 25—29.

† 1 Cor. xv. 51, and
1 Thess. iv. 15, 16.

prepared for the devil and his angels.”* The triumph of Christ shall then be complete, for then all his enemies shall be subdued under him.

* Matth. xxv. 31, 41.

SECTION IV.

THE DURATION OF CHRIST'S DOMINION.

I. General observations illustrative of the permanent duration of Christ's dominion.

The duration of this dominion is a matter of deep interest to the church of God. Unlike the kingdoms of this world, the dominion of Christ is destined to endure forever. Mighty empires have been brought into existence in different eras of the world's history; but after a brief, or sometimes longer career, they have passed into insignificance; and the mightiest that exists or shall exist, shall pass away as a tale that has been told. The stability of the best and purest of civil empires is only the stability of time, which shall itself ere long become superannuated. But the kingdom of Christ shall continue forever; his is a kingdom that shall know no end; extending as it has through the long vista of time, it shall continue when time shall have been swallowed up in the never-ending flow of everlasting duration.

The opinion is held by some, that the dominion of Christ shall terminate with the last judgment. This however is a hasty and superficial conclusion; and is formed on the ground, that as the ends for which dominion was conferred shall have been attained when all the redeemed shall be brought to glory, that therefore the dominion itself shall then terminate. Both the premises and conclusion are faulty. Were it true, that all the ends for which dominion was conferred on Christ were attained, which I do not admit, yet it would not

follow that the dominion itself must then terminate. There seems to be a total forgetfulness, that though dominion has been given to Christ, that "he should give eternal life to as many" as were given him to be saved, that he has obtained it also as a reward for his obedience and death in the place of sinners. While the former view might suggest the idea, that when the end was obtained for the securing of which it was used as a means, the dominion of Christ would then cease; the latter view shows that the suggestion may be incorrect. And that though no longer necessary as a means, yet as a reward it may be lasting as eternity.

1. It is not said that the mediatorial dominion being a reward necessarily proves that it is everlasting in its duration. But it is said that this consideration in the first place, neutralizes the objection; and then in the second place, furnishes a strong presumption for the perpetual duration of Christ's dominion. A presumption so strong as to amount almost to direct and absolute proof. We are not at liberty to conclude that the dominion of Christ shall come to an end when all the redeemed are brought to glory, on the ground of general reasoning; nor indeed by any kind of argument short of direct proof. A reward that would be withdrawn when the toil and service on account of which it is conferred cease could scarcely be called a reward. It is the nature of a reward to *follow* services on account of which it is bestowed; and not to end with them!

2. Although the Lord Jesus Christ has finished his work of obedience and suffering, because of which he was rewarded with dominion; yet he has not finished

his mediatorial agency. He shall continue to exercise functions peculiar to his kingly office, even after all his redeemed shall have been brought to glory. Of this kind is the communication of everlasting felicity to the saints in heaven; he shall not only bring them to heaven, he shall continue to confer upon them the imperishable and never-fading glories of eternity. "I give unto them eternal life." The communication of this is continuous, and shall be coeval with everlasting duration. And while he shall continue eternally to confer blessings upon his people; he shall also pour forth his retributive justice upon the impenitent and the ungodly; "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."*

The communication of felicity to the righteous, and the punishment of wicked men and devils, are kingly functions performed by the Mediator; and as these shall be exercised by him throughout eternity they necessarily imply the everlasting duration of his dominion.

3. The everlasting duration of Christ's dominion is implied in his intercessory prayer, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me."† First, this prayer refers to the glory of Christ as seen by the redeemed in heaven. It is no manifestation of glory made by Christ, no attestation of glory given to him while on earth, but something future. This is evident from the consideration that the Mediator was about to finish his personal ministry on earth, and ascend to heaven to take his place at the

* 2 Thess. i. 9. † John xvii. 24.

right hand of God, as the exalted Prince and Saviour of his people. "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself. And I came forth from the Father, and am come unto the world and go to the Father."* These scriptures show that it is a glory that shall be manifested to the saints in heaven, whither he was about to go. Secondly, the glory is mediatorial. It is not the divine glory of the Son of God, but that of the Son of God in his mediatorial character. This is determined by Christ himself when he says "that they may behold my glory which thou *hast given me*." That which *is given* to Christ is referable to him only as Mediator, for as the Son of God he can receive no accession of glory. In the third place, the glory of Christ seen by the saints in heaven can be nothing else than the manifestation of his kingly glory; that exaltation which followed his humiliation when he "sat down at the right hand of God." It cannot be supposed that this glory of the Mediator as the universal Lord, once displayed in heaven, shall ever cease!

II. The scriptures describe the dominion of Christ as a perpetual dominion.

"His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob

* John xiv. 2, 3, and xvi. 28.

for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”*

That these scriptures speak of the dominion of Christ is so obvious that no remarks are necessary to illustrate the propriety of the application. It may, as it has been sometimes indeed objected to these and similar passages, when used to prove perpetual duration, that the phraseology “for ever” has not always this extensive signification. I admit the premises, but deny the conclusion. It is admitted that “for ever” is sometimes used in scripture to signify limited duration. But it does not follow that it never signifies unlimited duration. So far from this being the case, the latter is indeed the proper meaning of the expression, while the former is only an accommodated application or figurative use of the language. As for example, when it is said respecting the feast of tabernacles “it shall be a statute for ever in your generations.” In this and other applications of the language in reference to the Jewish economy, the idea is necessarily limited by the temporary character of the object to which it is applied. In all such instances “for ever” can only signify the entire duration of the system of which the object was a part, and not absolute duration. A fair test is thus furnished by which the meaning of the language may be ascertained.

Again, it ought to be carefully borne in mind, in connexion with this view, that the literal and obvious meaning is always to be preferred as that which is designed by a writer. To attach to it any other meaning is not

* Dan. vii. 14. Is. ix. 7. Luke i. 33. Rev. xi. 15.

to explain but abuse his language; unless this is set aside by an evidently figurative design. But if neither the nature of the subject nor any thing connected with it demand such an exposition, then the literal and ordinary sense is always to be preferred.

There is nothing in the nature of the mediatorial dominion that requires a departure from the literal and obvious meaning of the language, by which its duration is expressed in scripture. No one will pretend to say that it is necessarily limited to the duration of the present state of things; and the bringing of all the redeemed to heaven, which Christ will do when he comes the second time without sin unto salvation. Far less can it be said that the nature or character of the Mediator requires such limitation. On what ground then, it may well be asked, is it assumed that the mediatorial dominion shall terminate with the final judgment? It is plain that not even a presumption can be formed in favor of this opinion, from the nature of the dominion, from the nature or character of the mediator, nor from the language by which the duration of his dominion is expressed. Nothing less than a direct scripture statement could warrant the opinion in such circumstances, that the dominion of Christ is limited in its duration. Whether such authority can be plead in support of it shall be inquired into afterwards. In the mean time the following considerations are submitted to the reader in connexion with what has already been stated.

As no argument against the perpetual duration of Christ's dominion can be safely drawn from the language by which it is expressed in scripture, it may now

be inquired whether that language does not furnish a direct argument for the perpetuity of Christ's dominion. It is of some importance here to state that the weight of the present argument does not depend on any one word, but on the meaning of the whole taken together. After what has been said I might feel myself justified in urging the phrase "forever" as an entirely satisfactory argument. For as the obvious meaning of the language is perpetual duration, the burden of showing that this is not the meaning here, rests upon those who deny it; thus it becomes obligatory upon them to show cause why the ordinary and proper meaning of the language is not to be preferred. But as my object is not so much to refute an incorrect opinion as to furnish my readers with satisfactory evidence of the hope that is in them on this point, I shall present the argument in another and stronger light. Were it necessary to abandon as an argument for the perpetuity of Christ's dominion the phrase "forever," sufficient evidence would still be furnished by the other parts of the description. It is not only said that it is "an everlasting dominion" and this expressed too by one of the very strongest words which the Hebrew language possesses to express perpetuity, but emphasis is given to the idea when it is added "of his government and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* Had there been any doubt it must now be removed. For whatever may be said and however much the subject may be perplexed by insisting on a limited exposition of the phrase "forever," it is beyond controversy that a "forever" that has no

* Is. ix. 7. Luke i. 33.

end must be everlasting in the most rigid sense of the term.

This is further corroborated by the description which Daniel gives of the dominion of Christ; he describes it as one "that shall not pass away" and a "kingdom that shall not be destroyed."* It is impossible to find language more distinctly indicative of perpetual duration than that used in the preceding descriptions of the continuance of Messiah's dominion. The conclusion is forced upon us by a kind of evidence that cannot be resisted without setting at defiance all the acknowledged principles of interpretation; a conclusion based not on the meaning of one word, however strong and expressive, but upon a great variety of language evidently designed by the Spirit of God to exclude all idea of a limited duration.

III. I examine an objection made against the perpetual duration of Christ's dominion.

That the dominion of Christ shall not terminate with the present state of things in this world is so obviously taught in the scriptures that the contrary sentiment would perhaps never have been broached had it not been for the misunderstanding of a particular text of scripture. This seems to be the only obstacle to a general admission of the perpetual duration of Christ's dominion. The scripture to which I refer is the following: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and

* Dan.vii, 14, "Est indestructibile seu regnum, quod non destruitur." Michaelis in loco.

power.”* That this is a difficult text of scripture is readily admitted; and that different expositions have been given of it is only what might be expected. But no difficulty of exposition can authorize us to explain one part of scripture in a manner inconsistent with what is clearly made known in another part of scripture. The difficulty in this instance, instead of being fairly met has received an explanation that operates directly against the fair and obvious meaning of a great number of other texts, which as I have shown contain the doctrine of the perpetual duration of Christ’s dominion. In view of removing the difficulty I remark

1. That the end spoken of in this passage is not the end of the mediatorial dominion. That it is so has indeed been assumed, but without evidence. A careful perusal of the preceding context as well as that which follows, will it is presumed, satisfy the inquirer that something else is meant by the apostle than the end of Christ’s dominion. The end of which he speaks is the consummation of the present state of things in this world; and that especially in its connexion with the dispensation of mercy. Then shall all the enemies of Christ and his people be put down, and the system of means employed by the Mediator for preserving and making meet for glory the many sons that shall be brought into it, shall then cease. In accordance with this is the exposition given by Turretine. “It does not refer to the end of the kingdom,” says he, “but to the end of the dispensation, to the end of all the enemies of Christ who are then to be so put down as never

* 1 Cor. xv. 24.

to be restored, to the end of the power and rule which Paul says would be abolished, and finally to the end of all the means which God hath instituted for preserving the good and restraining the wicked, which are now to cease, that God may be all in all.”*

2. That the delivering up of the kingdom spoken of in this scripture does not refer to the *resigning* of the dominion of Christ. If this were indeed the meaning of the apostle all further controversy on the subject must be at an end. It is the taking of this for granted that has created the difficulty, which might have been avoided by inquiring whether the text was not capable of an interpretation that would not have infringed upon the current language of scripture.

The Greek verb rendered into English by the words “he shall have delivered up,” is literally translated. But it is a word of too general a signification to be admitted as sufficient alone to determine an important question in theology. This verb like many others has various shades of meaning, all of which express one common and radical idea. But which of these is to be preferred in any particular instance must be ascertained by some additional aid, lest a sense be fixed upon it at variance with the analogy of faith. The generic idea of the word is “to give” or “render;” but this is so general as to make it impossible to know what is meant without having recourse to the subject spoken of,—to the context,—or to other parts of scripture; and perhaps to all of these. In his definition of this word Stockius says, “it includes generally the idea of giving, but the

* Turretine’s Theology, vol. ii, p. 537.

kind of giving implied varies not a little according to the diversity of the subject." These remarks are made not for the purpose of forcing an exposition out of the word favorable to the view which I have given in the preceding part of this section, but to show that it is not inconsistent with that view. In fine, that the meaning of the apostle is to be determined not by the general meaning of the word alone, but by its use, in connexion with the context and the subject in relation to which it is used.

The delivering up of the kingdom to God is not the abdication of Christ's dominion, but the delivering up or giving an account of its administration. To vindicate this exposition it is enough in the mean time for me to have shown that it is not inconsistent with the language used by the apostle. And the evidence which shall now be laid before the reader will it is hoped be deemed satisfactory proof of the correctness of the exposition. The context furnishes the principle by which the apostle's meaning is to be ascertained—a principle entirely at issue with the idea of abdication, because it assumes and takes for granted the continuance of Christ's dominion subsequent to the time at which it is said to be delivered up. If so, to "deliver up" can mean only to render an account of the kingdom, and not to abdicate or resign it.

The passage in the context to which I refer is, "And when all things shall be subject unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."* The second person of the Godhead, considered simply as

* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

such, cannot be meant by the word "Son." The Son, is of the same essence with the Father, and as a distinct person in the Godhead, is necessarily and must always be equal with the Father "in power and glory." On this point there can be no diversity of opinion among those who hold the scriptural doctrine of the trinity.

Three different expositions of this text have been given. First that the word "Son," as here used, signifies the mystical body of Christ, or the church. Secondly, the humanity of Christ. Thirdly, that it signifies Christ in his office of Mediator, the Messiah. If this last interpretation be what the apostle designed, then an important point has been gained; namely, that the delivering up the kingdom means nothing more than to give an account of its administration.

It would be difficult to establish the first of these three views; for though it is conceded that the church is the body of Christ mystical, and is repeatedly called so, in the scriptures, yet the church is never called Christ. But apart from this, which seems to me an insuperable objection, there is another which puts this exposition entirely out of the question. It is evident that the same person is meant by the term "Son," of whom it is said in the twenty-fifth verse, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." It is of the same that it is said, "the Son also shall be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all;" now this is Christ the Mediator himself, and not the church.

The second interpretation is equally indefensible. It

takes for granted that the human nature of Christ is spoken of in scripture by the name "Son." But those who adopt this exposition give no instance of such use of the name, and I may safely hazard the opinion that no such example can be given. The Mediator is indeed called "the Son of God," as also "the Son of Man." But neither of these is ever applied to his humanity alone. There is often a singular confusion of ideas regarding this subject; even some able writers confound the mediatorial character of Christ with his humanity, as if they were one and the same. In the language of scripture the humanity of Christ is spoken of impersonally, it is called "that holy thing." It is so designated with great precision, for the human nature of Christ never existed by itself; at the moment of the creation it was taken into personal union with the Son of God. There is a human nature, but no human personality. The Mediator has two distinct natures, the divine and human; yet he has only one person, that of the Son of God. If in the language of the angel, "that holy thing" which was born of the virgin, is "called the Son of God;" it is not the human nature that is thus named, but the Mediator, and so named because he is God as well as Man. I am further confirmed in this view by the consideration of what was said to Joseph, "and she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."* This demonstrates that it is the Mediator that is spoken of, because it is predicated of him that "he shall save his people from their sins."

* Matth. i. 21.

Now it was not the humanity of Christ that did this work, but the Son of God in our nature. For “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”* The names “Son,—Son of God”—and “Son of Man” are applied to Christ Jesus to designate, not his humanity, but his mediatorial person, the Son of God, in our nature. The union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Messiah, explains why he is called both “the Son of God” and “the Son of Man,” but furnishes no reason for applying one or other of them to his humanity alone. The import of such phrases must be gathered from their current use in scripture, and not from any mere literal explanation of the words. Of the title “Son of Man” Dr. Smith says, “On an examination of all the passages in which it occurs, it appears that when this appellation is used, it is always with a reference to some acknowledged character, function or work of the Messiah.—It went the full length of a claim to the Messiahship. This view of the origin and design of the phrase leads to the conclusion that though it literally expresses only a human nature, it is applied on the generalizing principle of language, to designate the Messiah *in the whole comprehension* of his person and character, yet with an especial view to his state of humiliation.”†

The conclusion that Paul does not refer to the humanity of Christ when he says “then shall the Son al-

* Heb. v. 8, 9.

† Testimony to the Messiah, Vol. ii, pp. 110—13.

so himself be subject to him that put all things under him," is now clearly established. The human nature alone cannot be intended here by the apostle, because a mere nature without a personality is not a "subject" of moral government. To be "subject" is the condition of a person, but not of a nature. Nor can the "Son," considered simply as a divine person be "subject;" for he is the Father's equal. We are thus brought to the only exposition that can be safely maintained; namely, that it is the Messiah, or the Son of God in our nature, acting in the relation and character of Mediator between God and man. The determination of this as the only fair exposition of the passage proves unanswerably that the dominion of Christ shall in the strictest sense of the language continue "forever." For the continued subjection of the Mediator presupposes the continuance. If the office and dominion of Christ should ever cease, then there could be no subjection as Mediator, for the plain reason that no such official relation would then exist as that of which the subjection is predicated.

To deliver up the kingdom to the Father, does not imply the resignation of the mediatorial dominion, but the rendering an account of it to the Father from whom it was received. That thus it might be shown to assembled worlds that the dominion of Christ was a delegated power; and at the same time, that God might be seen as "all in all." "This delivering up the kingdom to the Father at last" says a late writer, "respects only the termination of the present state of the kingdom and the means of its administration. Till this is

effected and all rule abolished he reigns according to the present mode; but it does not necessarily infer that he shall reign no longer, for he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever. He is amenable to his Father as his grand constituent, and must in end deliver an account of the whole of his administration; and he will deliver the whole kingdom, with himself at the head of it, into the hand of the Father, to be under him for ever. Were the economical kingdom to cease, the Father behoved to divest himself of that character in which he sustains the rights of Deity, and the Son also of the mediatory character which he conferred on him. But neither of these will take place, as is evident from the words of inspiration. 'And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall he also himself be subject to him that put all things under him; that God may be all in all.' The Son can be subject only as mediator, and subjection cannot be received by the Father but as sustaining the rights of Deity. The Father as the head of the economy will still be all in all. In him all the majesty, authority and glory of Deity shall shine forth, and from him as the glorious economical source of blessedness, the glorified church will receive through the Mediator eternal felicity."*

* Thompson's Sermons, vol. I, pp. 262, 263.

CHAPTER III.

THE UNIVERSAL APPLICATION OF SCRIPTURE TO THINGS CIVIL AS WELL AS RELIGIOUS.

SECTION I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE OBLIGATION.

I. It is commanded in scripture.

The sacred writings contain a revelation of the will of God, designed especially to make men wise unto salvation; but containing also precepts to direct them in all the different relations of life. They are the only infallible and universal rule of faith and practice; the rule not only of religious faith and practice but of every moral duty. The dominion of Christ over all things makes it obligatory upon men to receive and submit to his authority wherever it is known. "To the law and the testimony" is the command of Christ in the scripture, "If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."* The children of Israel to whom this precept was originally addressed, are commanded to go to the "law and the testimony" as the rule according to which they were to speak; and by parity of reasoning by which they were also to act.

* Is. viii. 20.

For, to hold correct principles and not apply them to the duties of life is to hold the truth in unrighteousness. And the same authority which commanded the Israelites to do this makes it our duty also. It is a statement of the rule of action given by the Lord Christ, which is universal and continuous in its application.

It is particularly worthy of notice here that the command to go "to the law and the testimony" does not refer to religious duties. This is plain from the consequences which are said to follow the neglect of the precept. "And they shall pass through the land hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry they shall fret themselves and curse their king and their God, and look upward." Their conduct will then have involved them in great difficulties because they have neglected to take "the law and the testimony" as their rule of action, in their ordinary and civil as well as religious duties. "Let them," says a judicious commentator on the passage, "prove all their principles and practices by this standard."*

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."† That this text commands the application of scripture to religious opinions and duties is too obvious to be questioned. For it is said to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." But it is evident that something more is includ-

* Scott. † 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

ed, so that the man of God “may be perfect, thoroughly furnished *unto all good works*.” All things coming under the description of “good works” are here included. And unless it can be shown that civil duties rightly discharged are not “good works,” then it must be admitted that they are included by the apostle.

The slightest attention to the apostle’s design in the context shows that the ordinary and civil duties of life are intended. The apostle, speaking of some men who practically despised these duties, says of them, they are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” And then says to Timothy, “but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned;” giving as the reason for this advice, that “all scripture is profitable,” that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

II. The scriptures furnish instructions, not only respecting religious but also civil duties.

The fact that the bible contains instructions respecting ordinary secular business, and the civil relations of society, proves that God designed such portions of scripture as obligatory rules. If men were at liberty to reject the authority of such scriptures, they could have no perfect rule to direct them in the ordinary and civil business of life. The Bible alone is the universal rule of moral action. Hence the scriptures contain a code of morals so generalized, and at the same time so minute as to meet every particular case, and include the whole circle of human conduct. The word of God is a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path. Apart from the reasonableness and importance of such pre-

cepts, the fact that the Bible contains instructions in relation to other duties, as well as those of religion, is sufficient to establish the obligation to apply scripture to the ordinary and civil duties of life.

“Submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God. Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. And ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of heart as unto Christ, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men. And ye masters do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.”*

“In order to glorify God and adorn the gospel it was requisite that Christians should submit to one another, and to all who had authority according to their different situations and relations in the church or the community, and the subordination established by the word or providence of God. This should be done not so much from secular motives of propriety and expediency, as in the fear of God.”† The principle clearly inculcated in this and similar passages of scripture is the application

* Eph. v. 21-25, and vi. 1-9. See also Col. iii. 17-25, and iv. 1.

† Scott on the place.

of divine truth to the secular and civil duties of life; that even these though not duties of religion, may be done religiously.

III. The end which men are commanded to keep in view, in all they do, shows that the scriptures are the universal rule of action.

The end commanded in scripture is the glory of God. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* The acts here referred to are of a common kind. Those specified are eating and drinking, while the general expression "whatsoever ye do," which follows, includes all other things, whether religious or civil.

These things are all to be done in view of the glory of God. That we may be able to keep this end before us with success, it is necessary to know the will of God respecting them. No argument is required to prove this position. Were scripture silent on the subject existing facts would establish its correctness. Where divine truth is not known or acted upon, the ordinary duties of life are never performed aright. Have not the duties arising out of the various natural and civil relations of life been most shamefully neglected, where the truth of the scriptures has not been known or acted upon? Can it be said that human reason is competent to direct men so that they may glorify God in doing the duties of parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, rulers and ruled? It is freely admitted that reason sheds a greater light on the duties of life than is wisely employed by man; but it does not,

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

it cannot give light sufficient to direct him to glorify God. He may have more light than he uses well, and yet not have enough to enable him to glorify God in all that he does. Reason tells us that we are bound to take the best and clearest discovery of the rule of duty as our guide; and that to leave this the perfect rule of scripture, and cast ourselves for guidance on mere reason, is exceedingly unreasonable.

Every relation, whatever may be its particular duties, includes moral obligation. Something is required of the person sustaining the relation; to perform this is a moral duty, to leave it undone is a sin. The neglect of such duty cannot of course promote the glory of God, but the duty may be done, and the glory of God may not be advanced by it. The manner of doing it may be wrong; it may be wrong in respect both of the nature and end. The wise man says "the plowing of the wicked is sin," that is, the motives and ends of the wicked man, even in this common act are sinful. In the same way sin is committed in the common acts of eating and drinking. Men too often eat and drink, not that their bodies may be sustained in health and strength, and that thereby they may glorify God with their bodies and spirits which are his, but to pamper their lusts while they live unthankful as the beasts that perish.

There cannot be a more preposterous dogma than that in which it is maintained that duties arising out of natural relations may be rightly performed without the guidance of scripture—that a duty founded in nature may be acceptably performed by sinful creatures, with-

out supernatural instruction. There is here evidently a confounding of the *obligation* with the *performance* of the obligation. These, however, are distinct. The obligation flows from the authority of God; the performance of the obligation is the act of man. And though founded in the law of nature, man may not know how to perform it without a new communication of the will of God. Religion itself is founded in the law of nature; it flows from the relation which man as a moral and dependant being has to God; it is the homage of man's dependence upon his Creator, but it will not be affirmed by any who believes in the truth of christianity, that man benighted as he now is in sin, knows how to worship God in spirit and in truth, irrespective of a new revelation from God. But the same sinfulness of nature that unfits man for the worship of God unfits him also for the performance of every moral duty.

"The word of God contained in the scriptures is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify him" in all the relations and duties of life. "We may see much of God's goodness" says an eminently pious writer, "in giving us such a complete rule for our walk, and a perfect directory, able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, for it holdeth forth instructions for our Christian walk in all our stations and relations, whether as church members or members of a commonwealth."*

As the application of scripture to the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline of the church is no

* Brown of Wamphray on Rom. xiii. 1.

part of her distinctive principles, but is acknowledged and professedly received by Christian denominations generally, I shall not enter upon the discussion of this important view of the subject; taking it for granted I proceed to show the obligation in relation to civil government.

The obligation to apply scripture to civil government.

I. The scriptures contain instructions on the subject.

“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all seasons; and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge, so it shall be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall go to their place in peace. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons; the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.* Take ye wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you, and ye answered me and said, the thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands,

* Exod. xviii. 21-26.

and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's; and the cause that is too hard for you bring it to me and I will hear it. And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.* The God of Israel said, the rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.† For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”‡

1. The instructions contained in these scriptures have all the authority of commands. Those contained in the first and second of these quotations were suggested indeed by Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses; they obtained however the divine sanction, for Moses said “I commanded you at that time, all the things which ye should do.” And as he “was faithful as a servant,” he did not command them without having received the Divine authority.§

* Deut. i. 13-18. † 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. ‡ Rom. xiii. 3-5.
§ Heb. iii. 5.

2. These instructions relate to civil government. They describe the character of civil rulers, their official duties, how they should be performed, and the duties of the people in relation to the government and its officers.

3. These instructions were not peculiar to the Jewish system. Because they are repeated in the New Testament, subsequent to the legal abrogation of that system, and that more pointedly and more minutely than they had ever been given in the writings of the Old Testament.

4. When the scriptures give us instructions respecting civil duties, this itself is conclusive evidence of the obligation to apply them in relation to such duties. It is not a matter of choice whether men should receive or reject such instructions, as they may think proper, the fact that God has given them in the scriptures constitutes the obligation to apply them to civil things.

II. The scriptures contain precepts in relation to civil things.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also; for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon the very thing. Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake;

whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.”*

III. Civil society is put under subjection to Christ.

“Be wise now therefore O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in him. And there was given him a dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. Which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet,—authorities and powers being made subject unto him. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.”†

These scriptures show that civil societies as such, are under subjection to Christ; and that he hath a regal power over them.

1. His authority over civil societies includes the right of prescribing laws to them. Without such right the regal power of Christ would be a nonentity. Legislation is inseparable from the regal character of Christ. “The Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.”‡

* Rom, xiii. 1,2,5,7. Tit. iii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13,14.

† Ps. ii. 10-12. Dan. vii. 14. Eph. i. 20-22. 1 Pet. iii. 22.

Rev. xix. 16. ‡ Is. xxxiii. 22.

2. Christ makes known no law, except that which is contained in the scriptures. This alone wherever it is known is the statute book of his empire.

3. From all which it follows, that civil society is under obligation to apply the scriptures in all their civil relations. They are bound to act on the great principles of equity contained in the written word, as well as those precepts that refer directly to civil government.

IV. Promises are made to nations, for obedience, and judgments threatened because of disobedience.

“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments which I command thee this day; that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. If ye will fear the Lord and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye, and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.”*

1. These promises are made to the nation of Israel in its national condition. This is apparent in the former of these quotations, from the contrast stated between Israel and the nations of the earth. In the second quotation it is equally apparent, from the consideration that the people are addressed in connexion with their king.

* Deut. xxviii. 1, 2. 1 Sam. xii. 14, 22.

2. The promises made in these instances are made on the condition that the nation should "hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord their God."

3. The obedience and fear required are regulated by the will of God revealed in the scriptures. This is stated in the promises themselves. For it is obedience to all the "commandments which I command thee this day." These include the moral law which had been just now given to the Jews, as well as those "commandments" that were peculiar to that people. The principle is applicable to all nations, enjoying the light of divine revelation, in so far as the moral law, and precepts of universal equity are concerned. The local and temporary character of their ritual system, and of many of their judicial laws did not affect the permanency and perpetual obligation of such as were moral in their nature. Obedience to the moral law is included in the promises, and the universal obligation of the moral law shows that the promises were not peculiar to the Jewish nation, but common to all who enjoy divine revelation.

Threatenings are denounced because of disobedience also. "But if ye will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers. Ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."*

V. Civil society is a moral person, and therefore under the same law as individuals.

* 1 Sam. xii. 15, 25. Is. lx. 12.

By a moral person is meant a number of individuals united in the social relation, having an understanding and a will common to the whole; and one common means of expressing the understanding, and the will of the whole. A nation can deliberate, resolve, and act, as a unit or whole; the resolves and acts of the majority are those of the nation, or moral person. "Nations or states are bodies politic, societies of men united together for the purpose of promoting their mutual safety and advantage by the joint efforts of their combined strength. Such a society has her affairs and her interests; she deliberates and takes resolutions in common; thus becoming a moral person, who possesses an understanding and a will peculiar to herself, and is susceptible of obligations and duties."*

Nations being moral persons are capable of moral obligations, and of being directed by the same principles and rules of action as individuals are. The law of God which as a rule of action binds every individual in society, also binds the whole. It would be strange indeed, if men when they acted in concert would be freed from obligation to obey that perfect rule of action which binds each one separately. If it were so, it would be an easy mode of becoming independent of the Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth!

But the divine law cannot be set aside by any social contrivance; it lays hold on the individual and binds him to obedience in every possible relation. It is universally admitted that men are under obligation individually to make the scriptures their rule of moral ac-

* Vattel's Law of Nations.

tion; and their civil union in society cannot free them from obligation to the same rule; because, though united in society, they continue to be men; and the law takes hold of them as men, in whatever relations they may be acting.

SECTION II.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN THIS
CHAPTER.

1. Institution of civil government. Institution is that which determines the civil relation of rulers and ruled, giving existence to civil government, as an appointed ordinance.

2. Constitution of civil government. This is the actual organization of society into a particular national existence, by embodying the abstract principle of institution into a concrete form of government.

3. Man's moral nature. This consists of the moral principles and endowments of the mind which are necessary to fit man as a proper subject of moral government. By these he is capable of understanding the meaning and perceiving the obligation of law as a rule of action.

4. Man's moral relations. These are two-fold; one respects God, the other man. Endowed with a moral nature, man sustains to God the relation of being a proper subject of government, and is bound to obey the law of God universally and without reserve. It is the relation of obligation and dependence. Man sustains to his fellow men the relation of obligation to perform certain duties to them. The summary of these is, "love thy neighbor as thyself."

5. The law of nature. This is the law primarily re-

vealed to Adam as the rule of his obedience. Like its author this law is perfect, and of perpetual obligation. It is incapable of change or improvement, because it is perfect, and is always obligatory because of its continuous duration. The law of nature is a transcript of God's moral perfections; it is these perfections embodied in the form of law to direct the action of rational creatures. It is identical with the moral law, a summary of which is given in the ten commandments, and more minutely exhibited in the moral precepts of the Bible. The moral law is no other than that universal law, which binds all men to obedience always and in every place.* The law of nature and the moral law are one and the same. To suppose the decalogue to be different from the law of nature is to suppose that there are two moral laws, which is as absurd as to hold that there are two eternal self-existent Beings. For as there is only one eternal self-existent Being, the transcript of his nature must be one, whether as impressed in the moral nature of the creature, or given in the form of a written law. The law of nature is identical with the moral law; this one law however, has been revealed in two different ways, first in the moral constitution of man, and secondly in a written form, a summary of which is contained in the decalogue or ten commandments. From the first of these modes of revelation it has received the name "law of nature;" from the second it has sometimes been called the "supernatural revelation of the law of God," or "the written

* Haec nihil aliud est, quam lex universalis, quae omnes homines obstringit ad sui observantiam omni tempore et loco. *Mastricht's Theologia*, p. 839.

law.” But whenever or however revealed, it is one and the same law, differing not in its nature, but in the manner of being made known.

The entrance of sin into the world has not destroyed indeed the law, or abrogated its obligation, for either of these is impossible; but it has very much obliterated the record of the law from the tablet of the human heart. The law is indestructible, but the record of it may and indeed has been nearly effaced from the mind of man. The traces which remain are only faint and imperfect characters. “This I say therefore and testify in the Lord that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”* In great mercy God has given, not a new law, but a new publication of the old law originally written on the heart of man. This republication constitutes “the written law” or supernatural revelation” of the divine will, is summarily contained in the ten commandments, and more fully exhibited in the moral precepts of divine revelation generally.

6. Light of nature. This has sometimes been confounded with the law of nature; they are however altogether distinct. The law of nature, as has been explained, is the universal law of action dictated by the Creator to man. The light of nature is the perception which man has of this rule of action; it is his knowledge of the law of nature. Originally man apprehend-

* Eph. iv. 17, 18.

ed the law in all its length and breadth; the light of nature was then co-extensive with the law of nature; the one was parallel and co-incident with the other, but sin has quenched in a great measure the light of nature. The depraving influence of sin blinds the understanding and sears the conscience of man so that he has not adequate views of duty. The light of nature is not competent to perceive the claims and obligations of the law of nature. The defect is not however in the law, but in man's incapacity to perceive the claims of the law, and perform its obligations. The law is the same now as when first promulged to Adam, but man's capacity is not now equal to Adam's. The law remains unchanged, and like its Author, unchangeable, but the light in man as a medium of perceiving it is lessened. Hence the need of a supernatural revelation. In a country where this is enjoyed, many things may be easily demonstrated, to be agreeable to reason, which reason unaided could never have discovered. Such furnish no evidence whatever of the competency of the light of nature; for in such instances reason is aided and guided by supernatural revelation.

To form a fair estimate of the light of nature it must be seen as it exists among heathens, where there are no supernatural revelation of the law. And there, the light of nature is only darkness.

SECTION III.

STATEMENT OF PRIMARY PRINCIPLES.

I. Civil government is a divine institution.

That civil government is a human device contrived by man to meet the exigencies of his condition, is an opinion as erroneous as it is common. That man would have learned by experience that advantages might be obtained from social life is readily admitted; but that this is the origin of civil government I deny. This would be to place it on the same level with any mere mechanical trade,—to give it no higher origin than human expediency.

“God, the supreme Lord and king of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good.* It is the will of God, revealed by the constitution of human nature, and more clearly in the sacred scriptures, that his rational creatures living together in one part of the world, and connected by a common interest, and by common duties, should enter into a civil association, for the better preservation of peace and order, in suberviency to godliness and honesty.”†

1. Civil government is instituted by God, in the moral nature of man. Man is designed for social life. The evidence of this design is found in the moral nature with which he is endowed. Subordination to order

* Confession of Faith, Chap. xxiii.

† Reformation principles, Chap. xxix.

forms part of the constitution of all rational creatures. Government exists among angelic beings; they have their principalities and powers, and might and dominions.* Government would have found a place among men though sin had not entered into the world. It is instituted in man's moral nature; and he is fitted for it by the dispositions and qualities conferred on him as an intelligent social being. "Utility appears to some to have great power to constitute and preserve civil society among men. But unless I am mistaken the gathering of men into civil society has a much more ancient origin, and a bond far more sacred. Otherwise, if every one would have a regard to his own private advantage, then utility, instead of binding human society together, would rather dissolve it.† "Magistracy is from God in its original; the charter was drawn up in paradise; civil subordination must have been, had man remained in innocence; but the charter was more explicitly renewed and enlarged at the restoration of the world after the deluge, and given out to man under the broad seal of heaven, 'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' The command of shedding the blood of a murderer was a part of his goodness, to secure the lives of those who bore his image. Magistrates are the shields of the earth, but they belong to God. They are the fruits of his goodness in their original and authority."‡

2. The institution of civil government is renewed in the supernatural revelation of the will of God. "Judges

* Eph. i. 21. † Buchanan *de jure regni apud Scotos*.

‡ Charnock's works, vol. I. p. 650.

and officers shalt thou make in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.”*

These scriptures do not refer to any thing peculiar in the Jewish polity. Civil government is common to man. The command given by Moses to the Jews, is reiterated by Paul to the Gentile converts.

The scriptures do not contain the primary institution of civil government; but they contain a renewal of the institution. The apostle speaks of it as an existing ordinance, and asserts its divine origin; it is “ordained of God.” It is not then said that civil government is instituted in the scriptures, but that the institution is renewed in the scriptures. The scriptures as a supernatural revelation of the divine will, contain a renewal of this ordinance, which had been originally instituted by God in the moral constitution of man. In this respect it stands on a similar footing with the appointment of marriage. This relation is distinctly stated in scripture, but is not there instituted; it appears in scripture as the renewal of a formerly existing institution. So is it with civil government; the appeal is made to scripture, not to prove that it is there instituted, but that it is there recognized as a divine institution.

II. Civil government is subordinated to Christ.

This is one of the all things put under his feet. Civil government has not its origin in the system of mer-

* Deut. xvi. 18. Rom. xiii. 1.

cy, but from God the Creator, and is revealed in the moral constitution of man; but it is subjected to the authority of Christ, and is part of the dominion that belongs to him as Mediator.

I am anxious to call the attention of the reader to this distinction. The distinction between the origin of civil government and its subsequent subjection to Christ. The origin of the institution is not in the least affected by the subsequent subjection of it to mediatorial authority. And yet this very obvious distinction has been so unaccountably overlooked, that the Reformed Presbyterian church has been frequently charged with holding the doctrine, that civil government has its origin in grace. This unjust charge has been made, not only by such as are too much blinded by prejudice to inquire with sufficient calmness what opinion is really held; but what is indeed surprising, it has been made by some, the correctness of whose views on the subject of civil government should have led them to a very different result. In the latter instance it is a mistake arising from not having attended to the above distinction. The church, while she has been careful to display a banner for the truth of Christ, in relation to his mediatorial authority over civil society, has been equally careful to guard against the erroneous notion that civil government is founded in grace. This charge has been frequently repelled by the ministers of the church when called to defend her testimony during the last hundred years. And she has by her official testimony denounced as an error the opinion, "that civil government is founded in grace."*

* Reformation principles, p. 119.

Civil government does not originate in the system of grace, and therefore is not instituted by the Mediator, but it is nevertheless subjected to him, as a part of his universal dominion. He has authority to rule over the nations of the earth, in their national relations and character, as well as over the individuals of which they consist. "Principalities and powers being made subject to him."

III. Civil government is constituted by man.

God the creator has instituted the ordinance of civil government; and it is now placed under the dominion of Christ. As an institution it is a divine ordinance. But the constitution of a national society is the voluntary act of the people, over whom the government is to be exercised. They have the right to erect themselves into a national relation. This right no human power may take from them; it flows from their moral relations to God. All men are born free and equal in respect of one another. "It is a settled point with writers on natural law, that all men inherit from nature a perfect liberty and independence, of which they cannot be deprived without their own consent."* A national society is organized or constituted by the adoption of a constitution containing the principles on which the government shall be conducted; and by appointing officers to administer the government according to the principles laid down in the constitution. The constitution distributes the power of government into its different branches; defines the amount as well as kind of power belonging to each; and determines in what manner the

* Vattel, p. 43.

power is to be conferred. To violate a constitutional provision is tyranny; and to exercise power which has not been legally conferred, is usurpation. Lawful civil rule is of God, who has instituted government; but the right to exercise civil power is conveyed to the ruler through the people. No man possesses a divine right to exercise civil power over his fellow men, irrespective of them as the medium of conveying it. Every lawful magistrate has a divine right to exercise civil power; yet the right is not personal or inherent in the man, but conferred upon him by the call of the people to bear rule over them. In this respect "the voice of the people is the voice of God." It is this that explains the apparently contradictory statements of scripture in relation to civil government being as well the ordinance of man as of God. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" is as truly language of scripture, as that "the powers that be are ordained of God."* "Peter and Paul being full of wisdom and sanctity and inspired by the same spirit, must needs say the same thing; and Grotius shows that they perfectly agree, though the one calls kings, rulers, and governors the ordinance of man; and the other the ordinance of God; inasmuch as God having from the beginning ordained that men should not live like wolves, in woods every man by himself, but together in civil societies, left to every one a liberty of joining with that society which best pleased him, and to every society to create such magistrates and frame such laws as should seem most conducive to their own good according to the mea-

* 1 Pet. ii. 13. Rom. xiii. 1.

sure of light and reason they might have. And every magistracy so instituted might be called the ordinance of man, who was the instituter, and the ordinance of God, according to which it was instituted.”* Civil government is the ordinance of God, because it has been instituted by him, it is the ordinance of man, as it is set up or constituted by man; being a divine ordinance civil society is bound to regulate its national relations and duties according to the will of God. Every nation has or ought to have sovereign power, in respect of every other nation. But nations are not sovereign in respect of God; they are moral persons, and are as much subject to his government and dependent upon his providence as individuals are. A people have a right to constitute a national society, but they have no right to set the will of God at defiance, in either its constitution or administration. The judgment of a whole nation cannot make wrong, right. Wrong done by a nation is as much rebellion against God as when done by an individual.

Nations then must take care not to assume independence of the divine law. This is the more necessary, as there is a strong tendency in the present state of society, to push the doctrine of civil and political independence to the infidel extreme, that the will of a majority of the people is right. And right because the people will it! Yet the will of a majority is no more right than the will of an individual. It is conformity to the will of God that gives to either the character of rightness. National society has a right to perform national

* Sidney on government, chap. iii. section 10.

acts, but this is dependent on a condition; the condition is, that these acts shall be in conformity to the divine law. Societies can no more absolve themselves from this obligation than individuals. The constitution and administration of civil government must be brought under the direction of the law of God. Those who constitute a civil government and those who administer its laws are bound, on principles of reason as well as scripture, to have regard to the clearest revelation of the divine will within their reach. The moral power which national society possesses is derived from the fact that civil government is a divine institution. If the divine law is rejected by a nation, government is not in that case the ordinance of God; nor is the ruler "the minister of God. They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes and I knew it not."*

* Hos. viii. 4.

SECTION IV.

THE CHARACTER OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

I. Moral character is essential to civil government as the ordinance of God.

The scriptures command subjection to civil rulers. To resist these is to resist God, who has instituted government among men. "Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." It is a matter of incalculable importance to inquire whether every existing civil power is "the ordinance of God."

If the mere providential existence of civil power makes it the ordinance of God, then every such power is entitled to conscientious obedience from all within its jurisdiction, and that too on the awful sanction of damnation! This conclusion cannot be evaded. It may be well to inquire however, whether the divine command does not contain some qualification that may very much modify and restrict the obligation to obedience. Previous to a particular investigation of the subject, equity suggests some doubt; it seems inconsistent with the principles of divine government, that men should be commanded to give conscientious submission to every civil government that may obtain a providential existence in the world irrespective of its character. The effect of this would be to annihilate national morality, and all civil and political liberty. It is not conceivable

from all we know of the nature and character of God, that he would thus sanction the systems of misrule that have trampled upon and crushed the rights of men, and done violence to his own holy and righteous authority; that have wantonly disregarded that law which commands love to God and love to man. Can it be credited that God whose word describes many of the governments of the earth by the odious symbols of ferocious beasts, who has destroyed all the ancient nations, and threatened to destroy all wicked nations, would command his rational creatures to acknowledge and obey as his ordinance, these very governments which he has either destroyed or doomed to destruction, because of their wickedness?

The law which reveals the duty of obedience to civil authority, describes also the character which proves its claim to receive obedience. The character is a moral one, and where it is not possessed, the conscientious obedience due to the ordinance of God cannot be claimed. The command of God cannot be urged in behalf of a system that does not possess the characteristics which he gives of that which is his ordinance. The want of these vitiates the claim. Obedience is indeed due to civil government, but not to such a government. The position on which the claim is founded is incorrect; the conclusion does not follow from the premises. The premises are, that conscientious obedience is due to government possessed of certain specified characters; but the conclusion is, that obedience ought to be given to every government!

Scripture is remarkably definite on this subject. The

civil government which obtains the approbation of God, and to which he commands men to give obedience, is uniformly described as moral and righteous. "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."*

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul gives a minute, and I may add perfect delineation of the ordinance of civil government. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing: render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."†

There are three things in this delineation of civil government to which I call the attention of the reader, as necessary to prove that a moral character is essential to civil government as the ordinance of God.

* Prov. xiv. 34.

† Rom. xiii. 1-7.

1. This scripture enjoins obedience to civil government. Very erroneous and dangerous opinions were held by many professed Christians, as early as the apostolic age, in relation to the ordinance of civil government. They held that they were absolved from subjection to all civil authority.—That in becoming Christians they became the free men of Christ, in such sense as absolved them from all obligation to obey civil authority. The New Testament writers frequently refer to this wicked as well as dangerous sentiment. “The unjust are reserved unto the day of judgment, to be punished; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government: presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.”* These scriptures, with their contexts, show that the ordinance of civil government was despised under the pretence of Christian freedom. “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.”† Hostility to the wholesome restraint of civil government is only one of the manifestations of human corruption. And if religion can be made a pretext to the indulgence of such corruption ungodly men will be sure to shield themselves under its cover. Such manifestations of human depravity were not new in the days of the apostles; they may be traced as far back as the rebellion of Korah and his associates in the wilderness. The anarchy which these unhappy men and their party attempted to introduce, was covered by the same pre-

* 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10, Jude 8th v. † 2 Pet. ii. 19.

text of religion. The whole congregation, they said, were saints, and therefore should not be subjected to the restraints of government. "They gathered themselves against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation."* The same disposition to anarchy manifested itself among the German anabaptists immediately after the reformation from popery. It was not opposition to any particular form or kind of government, because of oppressive treatment, it was hostility to the ordinance of government: like the revolvers in the wilderness, and those who in the days of the apostles despised dominion, they hated it because of its restraints. The pretext too, was the same—"all the people are holy." "They gathered together congregations in several places, and foretold in consequence of a divine commission, the approaching abolition of magistracy and the downfall of rulers and governors. But as the greatest part of these enthusiasts had communicated to the multitude their visionary notions concerning the new spiritual kingdom that was soon to be erected, and the abolition of magistracy and civil government that was to be the immediate effect of this great revolution, this rendered the very name of anabaptists odious, and made it always excite the idea of a seditious incendiary, a pest to human society."†

This odious principle was avowed and attempted to be acted upon in England during the protectorate of

* Numb. xvi. 3.

† Mosheim's History.

Cromwell, by what were called the “fifth-monarchy men.”* It has lately been revived, in part at least, by the no-government party in Boston and its neighbourhood, who maintain that all human government is tyranny!

Hostility to the ordinance of civil government was not peculiar to apostolic times; it found supporters in the earliest period of the Jewish commonwealth; it has been repeatedly revived since the reformation, and at the present time it is urged with no small portion of zeal in our own country. These facts illustrate the necessity of stating distinctly in scripture the duty of subjection to civil government. The ordinance was in hazard of being despised, and Christianity of suffering reproach on this account; the inspired writers are therefore taught to warn Christian professors not to “despise government, or speak evil of dignities.” Hence, too, the reason why obedience to civil government is so frequently commanded in scripture. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.† Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.‡ And let every soul be subject to the higher powers.” “Paul does not in this place,” says Buchanan, “refer to those who bear rule as magistrates, but of magistracy itself; that is concerning the function and office itself of those who bear rule over others: nor of one kind or other of government, but of every lawful kind; nor does he contend with those who

* See Neal’s History of the Puritans, during this period.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13. ‡ Tit. iii. 1.

think that wicked rulers should be restrained, but with such as despise all government, who in their foolish opinions respecting Christian liberty, maintain that it is unworthy of those who have been made free by the Son of God to be subject to any human power.”*

2. The reason given by the apostle why obedience should be given to the civil authority is, “For there is no power but of God;” the powers that are ordained of God. The divine institution of the ordinance is sufficient cause why it should be obeyed.

3. The apostle describes the character of the power to which obedience is due. There are urgent reasons why the character of the power to be obeyed should be carefully stated. The hostility against all human government which then manifested itself, and was afterwards to occupy so prominent a place among the corruptions of mankind, made it necessary to state explicitly the duty of obedience. And in connexion with the duty, to state the ground of the obligation, which is “for there is no power but of God.” But had the apostle stopped here the most mischievous consequences might have followed. Apt as men are to run from one extreme to another, the precept of the apostle enjoining obedience to civil authority might have been understood universally, irrespective of any moral qualification. And thus, while attempting to escape from the dangers of anarchy, have fallen into that of passive obedience and non-resistance; and have recognized every wicked system that might exist in the providence of God, as his institution. This probable danger has been realized. Modern times have presented the painful and mortifying

* *De jure regni apud Scotos.*

spectacle of professed Christians prostituting their sacred profession by the vindication of the absurd doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance. And striving to affix the seal of heaven's approbation to the vilest tyranny and oppression! Such views have been not only hurtful to civil society, by crushing frequently the hopes of mankind in respect of liberty, but they have had a most injurious influence on the interests of religion. They have done much to discredit Christianity before the world. It is not surprising that irreligious yet intelligent men, whose minds are deeply impressed with the importance and value of civil liberty should be prejudiced against religion, when they find many professed Christians exerting their influence on the side of oppression and wrong. That religion is not obnoxious to the charge is indeed true; but the distinction between religion and the faults of its professors is too nice to be made by a prejudiced or undiscerning multitude. Religion has thus most unjustly suffered through the weakness or the folly of its avowed, though often insincere professors. To correct this evil, and maintain unsullied the honor of Christianity, the scriptures delineate the character of that power which God has ordained and to which obedience is due. Subjection to oppression, submission to the arbitrary will of a despot, is not what the scriptures enjoin; nor do men show any respect to the institution of government, or to God who has ordained it, by any obedience of this kind. Nor is it enough to give a rightful claim to the homage of conscientious obedience that a government provides for the liberty and independence of its citizens. So far as this

goes it is well; nay, it is essential to the ordinance which has for its immediate end the welfare of society. But it is not all that is required of a government; it ought to possess such a character as may promote the glory of God as well as the good of society! There may be sufficient attention to the latter, while the former may be entirely overlooked. That it has been so is matter of fact; systems of government have been formed in both ancient and modern times, in which great wisdom and skill have been discovered in providing for human rights, but which at the same time have been left destitute of moral character. Such cannot be ranked among the powers which are ordained of God.

There is something remarkably selfish in a system which while it watches with ceaseless jealousy over the rights of men, throws contempt by its designed neglect on the claims of God. This is to dishonor, and not to glorify him in the ordinance of civil government. If immorality forms an essential part of a system it has no claim to be the ordinance of God; and so far as the claim is concerned it is not of much importance whether the immorality may be an aggression on the rights of man, or disregard to those of God, and the duties which civil government owes to him. In either case there is not an exemplification of the ordinance of God; and it is not to be ranked among "the higher powers" to which "every soul" is commanded to be subject. Such systems are at best but human devices.

It may be well for those who maintain that supernatural revelation has nothing to do with civil government, or who act on this view of the subject to consid-

er that while they thus set aside the claim of supernatural revelation, they remove also the only ground upon which conscientious obedience can be claimed by a government. It is passing strange indeed, that those who refuse to apply the written word of God to the character of a government should have recourse to it, to prove that it is the duty of citizens to give obedience. They ought to know that having refused it in the former, they have no right to appeal to it in the latter case. They do not act consistently with their own avowed principles. If however they are inconsistent the scriptures are not inconsistent, either with themselves or the character of their Author. For, if the scriptures point us to the duty of obedience to civil government because it is the ordinance of God, they describe also the character which it ought to possess, and the possession of this character is that which gives it all the claim which it has upon our obedience.

The moral character of civil government is described by the apostle in two different ways, each forming a distinct argument in proof of the position which I have laid down,—that a moral character is essential to civil government as the ordinance of God.

In the first place, he describes it as “the higher powers.” he does not mean by this the higher civil offices in the government, nor the persons who fill these offices; but he means the character of the government; and this is presented both in the constitution and laws and in the character of the officers and their administration of the government. The apostle does not describe offices of an exalted kind, nor the mere official

exaltation of those who fill them, but he describes the moral excellences which entitle both the government and its officers to obedience and respect. He describes moral excellence as that which constitutes a government the ordinance of God.

The word translated “powers,”* generally signifies moral as distinguished from physical power. It is not from this word however that I draw my argument but from the participle by which it is qualified,—the “higher powers.”† This word is not frequently used in scripture, but in all the instances in which it occurs it has uniformly one sense, that of excellency or moral superiority. The passage under consideration and the following are all the instances in which the word is used in scripture. “Let each esteem others *better* than themselves. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the *excellency* of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. And the peace of God which *passeth* all understanding.”‡ In these instances the word has only one signification, and that is moral excellence. And having this one uniform signification in all the other instances in which it is used in scripture, some very strong reason must be given to warrant a departure from this exposition, when used to describe civil government. “The higher powers” then, are evidently those that possess the qualification of moral excellence. It is of such that the apostle speaks; and it is such only that “every soul” is commanded to be subject to as the ordinance of God.

* ἐξουσίαις. † ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις.

‡ Phil. ii. 3. iii. 8, and iv. 7. In the second of these texts the word though used as a substantive is the same.

One other text remains to be considered in which this word is used, and which I have reserved for a separate examination, because it is used in connexion with the subject of civil government. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as *supreme*."* The word *supreme* is the same that is used by Paul; and what is of considerable importance here, is, that it is used in reference to the same subject, and for the purpose of expressing, not the supremacy of the king's power, but his moral superiority. The command of Peter is identical with that of Paul. They both enjoin obedience to civil authority, and both describe the character of the authority to which the subjection is due. It is not every government then that can claim conscientious subjection, but such only as are "the higher" or excellent powers.

The word was used by the Greek writers on government in the same sense. "The words are often found in the works of Plato and Aristotle, but applied only to such a man as is a king by nature, who is endowed with all the virtues that tend to the good of human societies in a greater measure than any or all those that compose them; which character I think will be ill applied to all kings. And that this may appear to be true I desire to know whether it would well have agreed with Nero, Caligula, Domitian, or others like to them; and if not with them then not with all, but only with such as are endowed with such virtues."†

* 1 Pet. ii. 13.—ὕπερέχοντι.

† Sidney on Government, p. 295.

The meaning of the description "higher powers," may now be considered as fixed, by an inductive process which includes all the instances in which the word is used in scripture.

There is another consideration which shows that the exposition which I have given of the apostle's language is the only one that can be given without doing violence to the context as well as to other parts of scripture. If the exposition which I have given is not the true one, if "the higher powers" are the higher officers of government, then it follows that the command includes obedience only to such officers as hold these offices. That it contains no obligation to obey inferior magistrates. A conclusion I presume, that will not be hazarded by any one. Inferior magistrates are as truly the ministers of God as those that occupy the highest places of power, and obedience is due to them in their office as well as to the latter.

Further, the apostle describes minutely the character of those to whom obedience is to be given. This is such as to show, that every government existing in the providence of God, is not his ordinance. That which the apostle describes possesses certain characteristics: where these are found, evidence is furnished of the ordinance of God for good to man. The ruler of whom the apostle speaks is, first, "not a terror to good works." In the second place he is a terror "to the evil." In the third place he giveth "praise" and countenance to the good. In the fourth place "he is the minister of God for good." In the fifth place "he beareth not the sword in vain." In the sixth place "he is the minister

of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." It is on the exemplification of these characteristics, that the apostle predicates the duty of obedience. "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

If the features of character upon which the apostle predicated the duty of obedience, were exemplified by the Roman government existing at the time he wrote his epistle to the Roman converts, then it was the ordinance of God, and its officers the ministers of God; and as such were to be submitted to, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." That this was its character will not, however, be affirmed by any one who is acquainted with Roman history. The Roman civil powers were opposite in character to all that is described by the apostle. So immoral, so brutal were they, that Tacitus says, that virtue exposed men that lived under them to certain destruction. The testimony of this historian is beyond all suspicion in a matter of this kind, and is corroborated by all concurrent testimony. The apostle then, could not refer to such a state of things, as an illustration of the ordinance of civil government ordained by God. Rulers who oppressed the good and virtuous part of the community, could not be the ministers of God. Rulers, to whom virtue was so obnoxious, that those who possessed it were thereby exposed to certain destruction, could not be described as a praise to them that did good, and a terror to the evil. The application to the Roman powers of the character described by the apostle, shows that these were not the powers to which he commanded subjection to be given.

They had not one moral feature in common. The latter is as contradistinguished from the former as light is from darkness, as virtue is from vice, as the ordinance of God is from beastly immoral power!

It is plain, then, that the apostle does not speak of the Roman, nor indeed of any particular government, but of the ordinance as instituted by God. The reason why the apostle urged the duty of submission to the institution of magistracy has already been illustrated. It was in great hazard of being despised and opposed, therefore the duty of obedience is enjoined, but without respect to any particular government. The description which follows the command shows most clearly the truth of this view.

All the difficulty which exists on this subject has been occasioned by separating the description of character which the apostle gives, from the command to obey. In utter disregard of this important connexion it has been assumed that the apostle commanded obedience to the Roman government then existing, and of course to every government that may have a providential existence. That such a conclusion should ever have been drawn from this passage of scripture is most extraordinary, as the passage contains internal evidence to the contrary, in that specific character which it gives of civil rulers. For they "are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." "All princes therefore" says Sidney, "that have power are not to be esteemed the ministers of God. They that are so must receive their dignity from a title that is not common to all, even from a just employment of their power to the encouragement

of virtue and to the discouragement of vice. He that pretends to the veneration and obedience due to the ministers of God, must by actions manifest that he is so. And though I am unwilling to advance a proposition that may sound harshly to tender ears, I am inclined to believe the same rule which obliges us to yield obedience to the good magistrate, who is the minister of God, does equally oblige us not to obey those who make themselves the ministers of the devil, lest in obeying him we obey the devil whose works they do."

II. The character described in scripture should be applied to a civil constitution and the laws founded thereon.

The constitution or fundamental principles of government, form the basis of legislative, judicial and executive action. When a people determine these first principles, in view of forming a national society, they may not arbitrarily establish such as seem agreeable to their own wishes irrespective of equity. A society may be sufficiently powerful to enforce by compulsion the most iniquitous constitutional provisions; but these are not a whit more equitable, because the society may have power to compel submission to them. Bands of pirates and robbers have the same kind of power, and employ it not unfrequently in the commission of the grossest violence. Such conduct receives and justly merits the universal execration of the civilized world. And why a national society should be judged by a different rule no satisfactory reason can be given. Vice is not changed into virtue, nor wickedness into righteousness because they may be sanctioned by constitutional

law; they continue to be vice and wickedness still; and no authority can confer upon them any other character. The pirate band may as well urge in vindication of their outrages the articles of agreement according to which their booty is to be divided, as a nation attempt to shield themselves from the charge of national wickedness on the ground of constitutional law; while candor and equity would not be able to make a difference in principle between the cases supposed. If they were stated as abstract questions in morality there would not be a dissenting voice among those whose judgment was worth any thing on such a question.

The will of society expressed in a written constitution of government is not righteous because it is their will; there is a law superior to the will of society, and to this it is bound to conform itself. This is the will of God made known to us in supernatural revelation. The divine institution of government gives society a right to exercise national rule, but it gives society no right to disregard divine authority. That law which binds man in his individual capacity binds the nation in its social relations. God did not confer on the social state the privilege of exemption from obedience to his own government, or freedom from conformity to his own law. Nations hold their charters from God on the tenure of national subjection to him and conformity to his law. It is extremely dangerous then to vindicate immoral principles because they are supported by constitutional law; such a plea only aggravates the evil. To give immorality such a place is itself an act of national rebellion against God, which aggravates but does not vindicate the wrong.

This is a matter of far more importance than has been generally deemed; indeed it is scarcely ever taken into calculation in the forming of civil constitutions. To account for so strange a forgetfulness of divine authority is much easier than to furnish a vindication of it. The encroachments made on the rights of civil society by arbitrary and self-constituted governments, has called the attention of patriotism almost entirely to one point; and that point is the security of popular rights. So far this is good; but there is something beyond this which has a higher claim upon society, and which it is unpardonable to overlook in a constitution framed in accordance to the will of a nation. Such however has been the fact exemplified in most of the struggles for liberty during the past: God has been forgotten! and the civil and political convulsions which at present heave the nations, are decidedly marked by a studied disregard to the authority of Jehovah; and the onward movement of this almost universal excitement, tends directly to infidelity and national atheism; but ultimately will terminate in anarchy or despotism!

It is the duty not only of the Christian but the patriot, to endeavor to stem a torrent, which if not resisted will sweep before it civil as well as religious liberty. For rotten despotisms and arbitrary power, in which neither the will nor the interests of the people are consulted, I have no sympathy. Let them perish without a requiem to lull them into oblivion! But, in the wreck of brutal and tyrannic power, O let not the homage which is due to the Governor among the nations be forgotten, nor his laws be trampled upon. High, high in-

deed, rear the temple of human rights; but thrust not from this temple the God of heaven: let its foundations rest on the truth of his law, and let its presiding genius be moral and religious principle.

To harmonize with the origin and ends of civil government every immoral principle should be carefully excluded from its constitution, and its provisions regulated by the unalterable principles of the divine law. Abundant scope is given in the institution of civil government, to the choice and predilections of society, in the various forms that may be adopted, and the detail of their subordinate arrangements. But however varied in political shade, they must possess a moral character; otherwise they are not the ordinance of God.

Care must be taken, not only to exclude every immoral principle, but also to embrace whatever is necessary to a system of government as a moral ordinance. Individuals commit sin, by "want of conformity unto," as well as by transgression of the divine law; and so does society, when they form a constitution of civil government, which though it may not contain any immoral principle, yet wants some important moral provision.

1. A constitution should contain a direct acknowledgment of God and his moral government. Civil government emanates from him as the Governor of the world. He is the fountain of power; and there can be no lawful authority among men, except what is derived from him, "For there is no power but of God." And by him "kings reign and princes decree justice."

Civil rulers are said to be the ministers of God, which implies their obligation as rulers to acknowledge him.

Their ministry consists in the administration of the constitution and laws. But how can they be the ministers of God, if he is excluded from these? The artizan and mechanic, as such, might as well be called the ministers of God, as civil rulers, who administer a constitution where God and his government receive no acknowledgement.

A people derive their right of forming a national society from God; to refuse or neglect then to acknowledge him in the employment of a power derived immediately from him, is as ungrateful as it is ungodly. It exposes society justly to the charge of national atheism. In a republic, law is administered in the name of the people; in a kingly form of government, in the name of the sovereign. And it would be esteemed an outrage on the sovereignty of the people or of the sovereign, designedly to exclude them in the administration of justice. Is it less, I ask, an outrage on the majesty of God, to presume to exclude him from a constitution of civil government? He holds the destiny of nations, and “doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” It is the interest of nations, as well as their duty to acknowledge him.

2. A constitution should contain an acknowledgment of the law of God supernaturally revealed in the scriptures. Every consideration that illustrates the duty of acknowledging the existence and government of God, illustrates also the duty of acknowledging his law. It is by this that he makes himself known to us as the Supreme Ruler; to exclude his law then is to exclude himself.

The scriptures contain the most equitable principles of civil government, and the only standard of national morals. This alone constitutes a sufficient reason why they should be distinctly acknowledged in a constitution. And that too, not merely as part and parcel of the law of the land, but as the supreme authority upon which the constitution and laws of a nation are founded. To admit the scriptures as part and parcel only, is to admit them merely as co-ordinate authority, a position which they do not occupy, their authority being supreme. To the law and to the testimony nations are bound to look; and by this, form their constitutions and laws. "If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."

3. A constitution should acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ. If it is the duty of nations to acknowledge the being and providence of God, it is their duty also to acknowledge Christ; the considerations that establish the former establish the latter. And for this good reason, that to him has been committed universal dominion,—a dominion over nations and worlds. To refuse national honor and subjection to Christ, is to refuse the authority of God, who conferred upon him as mediator universal dominion.

Christ "is Prince of the kings of the earth—Governor among the nations—King of kings, and Lord of lords." These are not empty and unmeaning titles; they express the lordship of Christ which he has received as the reward of his humiliation, and which he employs for the good of the church. And if not unmeaning titles they show that it is the duty of nations

to acknowledge Christ who rules over them as "Governor among the nations." The possession of real power demands homage from those over whom it is exercised. Nations are commanded to give such homage to Christ; and judgments are denounced against them if they refuse it. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." The homage thus commanded to be given to Christ is a practical duty, and should be exemplified in the whole administration of civil government; but the practical nature of the homage does not render unnecessary the acknowledgment of the duty, in the constitution. It is such an acknowledged profession of homage embodied in the constitution and laws of a nation, that gives its rulers the legal opportunity of doing homage to Christ, and performing the solemn obligations which the nation owes him.

III. The character described in scripture is applicable to the persons who bear rule in civil society.

The welfare of society and the glory of God require that properly qualified men be chosen to bear rule. The scripture contains a minute description of the qualifications and moral character of civil rulers. Mental endowments of a high order are of the utmost importance to the useful exercise of civil rule; but of still greater importance are moral qualifications. Possessed of the former, civil rulers may conduct the business of government with great energy and vigor; but destitute of the latter their administration cannot tend to the lasting prosperity of the community. It may indeed

give a transient success to a course of national policy, but finally it must prove a failure. Without virtue a nation cannot be held together. Virtuous principle is the only cement of society: remove this, and the whole political superstructure must soon fall to pieces in despite of all the intellectual qualifications with which civil rulers may be endowed. National prosperity requires moral character as well as intellectual capacity, as qualifications for civil rule. The value of this principle in its application to the constitutions and laws of nations, has been illustrated in the preceding remark, and it is equally important in application to the character of those who administer a government. It is impossible for even virtuous rulers to administer righteously an immoral, or essentially defective constitution, or code of laws. The character of the ruler however excellent, cannot change the nature of the evil principle which he administers. Nor, on the other hand, can a wicked ruler dispense righteous laws, without incurring the most imminent risk of despoiling them of their practical efficacy. The wickedness of the man is embodied in the official ministrations of the ruler.

Here, however, I guard the reader against the notion that grace, or personal piety, is essential to lawful civil rule, though it is of the very last importance to the successful discharge of civil duties. Other things being equal, a Christian will certainly perform the functions of civil rule with greater advantage to the commonwealth, than a man who is not a Christian. Yet grace cannot be made a formal qualification for office. It cannot indeed be made a formal qualification of church-

membership; far less then, of civil office. In many instances it is impossible for man to say with certainty of his fellow-citizen whether he is, or is not, a Christian; the application of ordinary tests may frequently be deceptive. Sometimes he may account a man a Christian whom God who knows the heart, knows to be a deceiver; and he may esteem one to be a hypocrite, who is a Christian indeed.

The impossibility of testing whether a man is a Christian does not however, set aside the necessity of moral qualifications; it may show that grace cannot be essential to civil authority, but it does not show that moral character is unnecessary. Moral qualifications are within the reach of human knowledge, and can never be safely dispensed with; nor have a community any right to dispense with them. That perfect revelation of the ordinance of civil government which is found in the scriptures, determines the indispensable importance of moral qualifications. If the heart cannot be judged by man, professed principles of action and the outward visible conduct may be easily ascertained. On this point the scriptures are explicit. "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness."* A man who despises Christianity by an open disregard of either of its precepts or its duties, does not fear God; and is by this precept as truly disqualified for rule over a people enjoying the light of Christianity, as is a lying or covetous man. An irreligious administration of government tends directly to the ruin of society, by the effects

* Exodus xviii. 21.

which it unavoidably and uniformly produces. “When rulers break the laws of God, can they expect that men will reverence their laws, or that they will treat kings and ministers with respect, who set them the example of disregarding God, the fountain of all legitimate authority and honor?”*

It is the duty of rulers to exemplify in their administration of government the character given of them in scripture. “I charged your judges at that time, saying, hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”†

In addition to the moral excellence which I have been illustrating, the scriptures require as necessary qualifications:

1. Mental capacity. The happiness of society and the glory of God, which are the ends of civil government, are of too weighty importance to be entrusted into the hands of weak and incapable men, therefore the scriptures require ability and talent as necessary qualifications for civil rule. When incapable men are exalted to power, the happiness of a nation suffers; its peace and even independence may be jeopardized, and the institution of government itself brought into disrepute. The religious, moral, and commercial interests of a country may be sacrificed by feeble though well intentioned rulers. Hence it is said that “Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over all the people.”‡

* Douglas on the prospects of Great Britain.

† Deut. i. 16. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

‡ Exod. xviii. 25.

2. Wisdom and intelligence. To mental capacity there should be added the qualification of mental culture and improvement. Among the most uneducated, men of great natural endowments may often be found; but these without culture would not qualify a man for the duties of civil government. For such duties the mind should be improved by reading, reflection, and an intimate acquaintance with human nature. "Take ye wise men, and understanding, and I will make them rulers over you," is the command of God, speaking by Moses to the people of Israel.* This too is the dictate of experience and common sense. Study and training are judged indispensable preparations before a man can be admitted to the practice of medicine or law. And, is civil government of less importance than these professions, however highly they may be esteemed?

It is strange indeed, that men who are unwilling to risk their health in the hands of an unskillful physician, or the defence of their property in those of an unlearned lawyer, should have no repugnance to trust their lives, liberties, and property, and those of their posterity, in the hands of ignorant legislators or executive officers! Rulers should have an intimate acquaintance with the revealed will of God. This contains not only the institution of civil government, but also invaluable precepts to direct rulers in the performance of their duties. In view of this the Jewish kings were commanded to have a copy of the written law, and to read in it all the days of their lives.† Embraced in the "wisdom" required of a civil ruler, is an extensive ac-

* Deut. i. 13. † Deut. xvii. 18-20.

quaintance with the constitution and laws of his country, which it is presumed are in conformity to the divine law. History, and especially that of his own country, should be the subject of his study. He should too, be a man of observation, who has thoroughly studied the frame work of society; one that has a deep insight into human character, and understands well the springs of action in social life. Ennobled by a love of equity, and guided by an intimate acquaintance with human nature, a civil ruler may often promote the interests of the community, when the mere application of the letter of the law might be injurious. There is a certain amount of discretionary power left in the hands of a civil ruler. Sometimes the interests of the community require forbearance; a ruler, then, must be careful not to stretch to the utmost, the letter of the law. Again, a well timed act of severity may be demanded. The course which in one case might be judicious, might in another be exceedingly injurious to society. Hence the need of wisdom as a qualification for civil rule.

3. He should be a man well known. This will aid in giving weight to the character of a ruler. The administration of a well known and popular magistrate may be sustained and approved, while the same course might have failed in the administration of a less known and less popular magistrate. It is true, the righteousness of an administration will vindicate a magistrate in the judgment of the wise and candid; but at the same time it is of the utmost advantage to a commonwealth that acts of government be submitted to cheerfully. And the known character of a civil ruler will often sus-

tain him when the righteousness of his administration may fail to produce general satisfaction in the community.

IV. The moral character described in scripture is of vital importance to the preservation of government, and the happiness of a people.

The scriptures do not decide the particular form which a civil government ought to take; this is left to be determined by those who constitute themselves into a national condition. But the scriptures determine the principles upon which a government should be constituted; and these are the great principles of equity contained in the decalogue and in the moral preceptive parts of the Bible. Regulated by these, civil government will be equally removed on the one hand from tyranny and oppression, and on the other from popular licentiousness and disregard of lawful authority. During the course of four thousand years the greater part of the nations of the world have been oppressed by wicked rulers; but oppression has produced resistance, and the current of opinion throughout the world is rapidly flowing to an opposite extreme. An extreme equally at variance in principle with the law of God and the good of society as the former. And unless the aspect of the times in this respect undergoes a remarkable change, the world may yet experience from popular violence, evils as great, if not in duration at least in intensity, as those that have hitherto been felt under tyrannical misrule. It is natural to man to err. And error delights in extremes; it is the more necessary therefore to guard against such evils. For a government that

admits one or other of these extremes is not the ordinance of God. Although scripture does not define the form, it furnishes principles that ought to direct a people in constituting and administering national government.

The good of society is the immediate, and the glory of God the ultimate end of civil government; no form therefore can be agreeable to the institution of God that does not accomplish both of these ends. To pretend to seek the one of these at the expense of the other, is to oppose the design purposed by God in the institution. Indeed, they cannot be successfully sundered; they have been linked together in heaven's purpose, so that the neglect of the one will ultimately prove the destruction of the other. No form however popular, can ultimately secure the good of society, which sets aside the claims of the Governor of the nations. Disregard to these will open a flood-gate through which popular right will be finally swept away. And the idol for whose sake God has been dishonored and Messiah robbed of his prerogatives, will devour its thoughtless devotees. On the other hand, no argument is necessary to show, that a government which tramples on popular rights and thwarts the good of society, is not the ordinance of God. The claim of divine right put forth on behalf of such a government, is fraught with impiety, and an outrage on common sense.

Human wisdom cannot contrive a system of government that shall possess permanency of duration, in the formation of which the written word of God has not been consulted and respected. It is necessarily imper-

fect; and its imperfect construction leads to dissolution, because it lacks that element which alone can give cohesion to the parts, and bind them together till time grows old. It wants that conservative principle, which alone can preserve a government from falling into decay: the want is an essential weakness, that must soon betray itself by the most unequivocal symptoms of dissolution. The more popular too, the form of government may be, in which the conservative principle of Bible morality does not find a place, so much greater is the danger. In less popular forms individual virtue has a larger and more influential operation, which may retard for a time the process of decay. In the former the influence which the mass of the people possess, though rightful in itself, is more likely to be abused than in the latter, if the revealed will of God is overlooked. The more widely power is diffused among a people, the greater will be the descending velocity, whenever the regulating principle is removed. A civil ruler, lord Bacon says, "must make religion the rule of government, and not to balance the scales; for he that casteth in religion only to make the scales even, his own weight is contained in those characters, mene, mene, tekel, upharsin, he is found too light, his kingdom shall be taken from him. And that king that holds not religion the best reason of state, is void of all piety and justice, the supporters of a king!"*

*Bacon's works, Vol. II. pp. 393-4.

SECTION V.

THE DUTIES REQUIRED OF A GOVERNMENT.

Next to the glory of God, the happiness of a people is the great end of civil government among men. The more perfectly that it secures these ends the greater perfection will it have obtained. The civil ruler "is the minister of God for good" to man. He is called to the administration of government, not that he may seek his own aggrandizement, or pursue his own selfish and ambitious purposes; but that he may serve God, by promoting the happiness of the people over whom he is called to bear rule.

I. It is the duty of a civil government to protect the people from external violence and aggression.

This duty includes in it the power of employing coercive means, and of making war. To refuse a government this power, is to take away from it the means of securing the happiness of the people. As long as there are wicked men, and immoral governments which disregard the claims of equity and encroach upon the rights of other nations, compelling obedience to their unjust demands by brute force, so long must a righteous government have the power of defending its citizens from such aggressions; and in doing this they must repel force by force; for remonstrance and other moral means cannot repel overt acts of violence. For a government to decline or neglect this means of defending a nation, would be to encourage unprincipled na-

tions with whom they have intercourse to the commission of every kind of outrage upon them. It would be a surrender of all that is dear to man on earth, to the unrestrained violence of such as possessed power without principle!

War, I admit, is in itself a tremendous evil; and is always connected with and followed by the most distressing circumstances! and no prudent government will rashly employ it, even in cases of the greatest magnitude, as a means of defence; nor will they at all, for slight reasons, enforce their rights by an appeal to the sword. The good to be secured must be sufficiently great to counterbalance the certain evils which war must necessarily inflict. In cases of the greatest magnitude war cannot be waged without a violation of Christian principle, till all other means have been tried and have proved unsuccessful. But when moral means fail, self-preservation, common sense, and the unalterable dictates of justice say that war is necessary and just! To decline it in such instances, is to decline the only means of a nation's security, and therefore fail to obtain a leading object of government—the happiness of a people.

That the greater number of wars that have been waged in the world have been unjust and unchristian I most readily concede. These, however, are only an abuse of national power, and form no objection against waging war on just grounds.

II. It is the duty of a government to protect its citizens in the enjoyment of their rights.

Citizens may be restrained in the enjoyment of their desires without any encroachment upon their rights. Right is defined by law; and when the desires of men grasp at objects irrespective of law, they are not deprived of any right when they are restrained from possessing them.

Liberty, or human right, in its most exalted sense, consists in being maintained in the possession of whatever is secured to man by the Divine law. I do not say, whatever may be secured by the constitution and laws of a country, because these may be most unrighteous. The law of God is the standard by which all right must be tried; and in accordance with which constitutions of civil government and laws ought to be made.

No man can have a right to do what he pleases. This would not be liberty but licentiousness, and instead of promoting the happiness of a people would most certainly destroy it. The pleasure and the will of the powerful few would then be gratified at the expense of society generally, as has always been the case in despotic governments; and such must always be the case, where the Bible principles of civil government are set aside, however liberal the form of government may be. The moment that these principles are departed from, that moment a nation enters upon dangerous ground, and no human wisdom or foresight can possibly balance the machinery of government, so as to prevent encroachments on the rights of one part or other of the nation. Despotism on the one hand or anarchy on the other, must be the result.

The happiness of a nation requires that the citizens should be protected in all things allowed by the law of God; their persons, their political rights, and their property. If they are disturbed in one or other of these, their happiness is interfered with.

1. Citizens have a right to be protected in their persons. It is the duty of a government to throw the shield of protection over even the humblest, as well as the most powerful citizen, as perfectly as possible; and if in any case he is injured, to redress his wrong. He is to be protected especially in the enjoyment of personal freedom. If a government makes, or suffers him to be made a slave, his happiness is not only interfered with but entirely destroyed, as far as it is in the power of man to make him unhappy.

To deprive any one of the right of personal freedom, unless as the punishment of crime, is a violation as well of the law of God as of the dictates of reason; and is of all privations the most eversive of the ends of civil government. A government is destitute of an essential characteristic of God's ordinance for good to man, if the personal freedom of the subjects of government is not secured and protected. "No power which deprives the subject of civil liberty, is approved of or sanctioned by God, or ought to be esteemed or supported by man as a moral institution."* It is of no importance as far as this principle is concerned, whether the encroachment is made by the few against the many, or by the many against the few. As it respects moral principle

* Reformation principles, pp. 114, 115, Ed. 1835. See also p. 119.

it makes no difference whether twelve millions hold three millions in the condition of slavery, or whether the three millions should hold the twelve millions in this condition. In either case there is a violation of human rights, and a transgression of the divine law, and the ends of government are defeated. The principle is not changed, nor is the evil lessened by any consideration of constitutional or legal peculiarity in a nation. A people, when they organize themselves into a national condition, cannot rightfully confer a power upon the government which they create, of reducing to a state of slavery or holding in that state, any one within its jurisdiction. The will of a majority of the people cannot make it right. There is a power superior to the will of the majority, namely, the will of God. A majority have indeed the right to determine the constitution and laws by which they are to be governed, and this they exercise through the medium of their representatives. But this right is subordinate to the expressed will of the ruler of the universe, who is superior to all nations, and from whom if they have power, they have derived it. But he has not given authority to nations to deprive any of their citizens, few or many, of personal freedom. This is an inalienable right which human authority cannot rightfully touch.

It is true, that in lieu of the advantages gained by the social relation, men surrender part of their private rights; but there is not a surrender of them all, for were this the case the social relation would be worse than useless, it would be a positive injury. The advantage to the individual is, that by parting with certain original rights the exercise of which are not necessary to his happiness,

those that are necessary are more perfectly secured to him; such, for example, is the right of redressing wrongs which he may suffer. This he surrenders into the hands of society. His happiness is not impaired by this, but rather increased. For there is a greater probability that redress shall be obtained through the medium of the magistrate, than by the exercise of the original right.

Slavery is opposed to the revealed will of God. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand shall surely be put to death. The law was made for men-stealers."* The sin thus pointedly condemned in scripture, a government is bound to prevent by all due care; and if committed, to punish with the utmost severity. The divine law secures to every man in the social state the right of personal freedom, and makes it the duty of civil rulers to see that every person within the state be protected in its enjoyment. A government must not oppress those over whom it exercises rule, nor suffer one part to oppress another. They are bound to rule "in the fear of God. They shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not respect persons. That which is altogether just shalt thou follow."† The privation of personal freedom is the greatest injustice; and of all kinds of oppression the most intolerable, and the most ruinous to the oppressed. The right of personal freedom a government is bound to protect, in the case of even the stranger who has sought protection within its jurisdiction from

* Exod. xxi. 16.

1 Tim. i. 10.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 3.

Deut. xvi. 18-20.

the power of the oppressor. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in the place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best; thou shalt not oppress him."*

2. Citizens have a right to protection in their political privileges. The enjoyment of this is necessary to the comfort and happiness of society. The privation of political freedom, though not so injurious to society as that of personal freedom, is yet a violation of equity, and therefore operates most injuriously on the welfare of a community. The subjects of a despotic or tyrannical government have no rational security for the continued enjoyment of even personal liberty. This insecurity must have a disastrous effect upon the present happiness and future prospects of a people. But were there no uneasiness or alarm on this account, still the privation of political rights is exceedingly injurious. Deprived of these, a people have no satisfactory security for the possession of property; few inducements to study liberal arts, or practice ingenuity and industry as the means of obtaining a competence, or of enjoying rational pleasure. Idleness, ignorance, and general profligacy of manners are the almost necessary results. In such a state of things the aggrandizement of the few is obtained at the expense of the many. The monopoly of political rights is the worst of all monopolies in a civilized state. It is in its own nature unjust, because it violates that political equality which forms a fundamen-

* Deut. xxiii 15, 16.

tal principle in a scriptural national society. And it is injurious in its consequences; as indeed nothing can be beneficial in effect which is wrong in principle.

No adventitious circumstance can equitably be made a qualification for the enjoyment of political rights. Such for example as property, or the color of a man's skin! These do not confer upon their possessors either peculiarity of claim or fitness for the exercise of political rights. Property does not make a man either wiser or better: nor does the color of his skin or the shade of his complexion. An aristocracy based on the principle of education and mental superiority would be *perfect wisdom* in comparison of an aristocracy based on the principle of property or of color! This is so intuitively evident that I am afraid the man who does not admit it as a first principle in the science of government is not to be convinced by argument, nor reached by any conclusion however legitimately drawn from the principles of equity.

The pretence that property gives its possessor a greater interest in the welfare of a state, and therefore a right to greater weight and influence in the government, is too superficial to satisfy any one, except such as are in possession of the assumed qualification, or those whose prejudices are enlisted already in its favor.

In the application of a general rule there may be exceptions; but these must not violate the principle of right upon which the rule proceeds. The exceptions should be such that while they may set aside the mere letter of the principle, are in accordance with its spirit and design. To exclude minors, for example, from the

exercise of political rights, is not unjust; because in the exception it is presumed, and justly too, that they are incapable of exercising these with safety to themselves or the community. So with the vicious and the criminal. Such may not be entrusted with the exercise of rights which may probably be abused to the injury of society and of themselves.

The interest which a man may have in the prosperity of the state which arises from property dwindles into insignificance in comparison with that which is personal. Civil and political liberty, and the advantages connected with these are immeasurably more valuable to a man than countless wealth, and deserve to be more jealously watched and guarded.

It is impossible to establish the equity of imposing taxation upon a citizen, and at the same time deny him the right of elective suffrage; thus subjecting him to the operation of laws which he has no power, directly or indirectly, of making. The fact that a man is to be made the subject of a law, is a sufficient reason on grounds of equity why he should have a voice in making that law; unless he may be disqualified by vice or by incompetence. But keeping out of view such exceptions as are necessary to preserve equity, and secure the objects for which civil society has been instituted, justice requires that every man should have a right to say by what laws he is to be governed, irrespective of any adventitious circumstance. Property furnishes no security to society that political rights will be properly exercised. A poor but virtuous man may take a deeper interest in the welfare of the state than

his rich but wicked neighbor; and will most certainly promote its welfare incomparably more. Every man cannot have a direct voice in any of the departments of government, but he ought to have it mediately through his representatives. The principle of representation is established by God in his dealings with man. It was exemplified in the covenant of works, and in the covenant of redemption. In consequence of the former, by the disobedience of one "many were made sinners;" in virtue of the latter, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." It is exemplified also in the relation which God has established between man and woman. "The head of the woman is the man." Upon this principle is the divine institution of government settled. A scriptural civil government is a representative system; alike removed on the one hand from the arbitrary rule of a despot, and on the other, from the licentiousness of anarchy. The right of bearing rule over a civil society is not the patrimony of any man; nor can it be scripturally exercised by the whole community, for the institution makes a distinction between rulers and those over whom they bear rule. Between the vicious extremes of arbitrary irresponsible power, and an impracticable universal democracy, is the divine principle of representation. This gives to the people the right of choosing those who shall exercise government over them. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes."* in the exercise of this right, it is the duty of a government to maintain and

* Deut. xvi. 18.

protect its citizens; because the happiness of the community is intimately connected with the free and unfettered choice of their rulers.

3. A government owes protection to the people in the enjoyment of their property. The insecurity of property in a commonwealth, prevents industry, impoverishes the people, encourages idleness and crime. The moral as well as the commercial interests of a community then, demand the most, perfect security; let property be insecure, and national happiness is at an end.

Security of property includes in the first place that moneys necessary for carrying on the government should be levied on the principle of rigid economy, that no burdens should be imposed unless the safety or the welfare of the community positively demand them. Excessive taxation virtually destroys the security of private property, or the same effect may be produced by the manner in which it is exacted; if it is arbitrary and uncertain in the mode of imposition, insecurity of property will be the result.

In the second place, security of property includes that citizens should be protected against unjust claims. For cases of disputed property, provision should be made for an equitable, cheap and speedy decision. The absence of any one of these creates insecurity. If judicial decisions are not equitable, parties in such instances are defrauded under the cover of legal proceedings. If the means of obtaining justice is not cheap, it is put beyond the reach of the poor; if not speedy, it is in many cases equivalent to an absolute denial of justice.

III. It is the duty of a government to execute justice by punishing crime.

1. Crime is punishable because it is injurious to society.

Civil society is established to promote peace and order among its members. It has a right to make the civil constitution and laws by which it is to be governed. A right arising not merely from the voluntary assent of the parties entering into this relation, but mainly because civil government is a divine institution. Hence flows the obligation under which every national society is to make its constitution and laws in conformity to the known will of God. Constitutions of government and laws which are not in conformity to the will of God, have no moral power or obligation on the conscience; because the condition upon which it has received the authority to make these has been violated. For it will be conceded that God does not give to society a right to trample upon his own revealed will. The obligation to obedience under which the subjects of human law are, is derived from its equity, or in other words from its conformity to the will of God; for this is the rule by which its equity must be tried, this is the charter of national authority.

The same principle which binds the subjects of law to the duty of obedience, confers upon society the right of inflicting punishment if the law is disregarded. It is a right, too, which society ought to exercise; for it is not a personal prerogative conferred upon civil rulers with the exercise of which they may dispense according to their own pleasure. The power of punishing crime is in one sense a prerogative, in another it is a duty; it is the prerogative of society in relation to offenders, but in

relation to God it is a duty which it owes him, and to itself.

The good of a civil community requires the punishment of crime; and this is one reason why God has given to society the right of punishing offenders. Were crimes permitted to pass with impunity, the ends for which civil society has been instituted would be lost, and society itself would soon be dissolved. Virtue must cease to be respected, if vice is not punished; and in the absence of virtue there can be neither peace nor order in society. In this imperfect world, the punishment of crime is necessary for the security and preservation of society.

The punishment of crime is exemplary. One end of it is to influence society; and in the first place it accomplishes this as a preventive. It deters the vicious by operating on their fears. The danger which accompanies indulgence in vice, produces beneficial effects by often restraining from the commission of crime persons who are not under the influence of virtuous principles. The value of punishment, in this view of it, does not depend upon the severity, but on the certainty with which it is known to follow the violation of law. The nature and amount of punishment ought to bear an equitable relation to the character and aggravation of the crime, on account of which it is inflicted. But no adaptation of this, however nicely proportioned, can operate upon vicious and unprincipled minds, without the deeply impressed idea of the certainty of infliction. If in the administration of criminal jurisprudence the guilty frequently escape, whether this may arise from the spuri-

ous sympathy or dishonesty of jurors, the unfaithfulness of judges, or the imprudent and too frequent exercise of the pardoning power, the result will be nearly the same, and that result will uniformly be the increase of vice and crime. There is in every community vast numbers, not only of the poor but of the wealthier classes in society, who are restrained from violating the laws merely from a sense of danger. It is the apprehension of the punishment which may follow, and not a sense of the evil of crime itself, that influences such to avoid its indulgence. Punishment is therefore held up in terror for the prevention of crime, and the more certainly it is known to follow this, the more salutary will be the example. In the second place, it influences the virtuous by increasing their abhorrence of vice, and encouraging them to promote the peace and order of society by a cheerful submission to its equitable arrangements. Civil rulers are “a terror” to evil doers, and a “praise” to them that do well.*

2. Crime is punishable by the civil ruler because it violates the divine law. God designed by the institution of civil government to promote his own glory as well as the good of society. He “hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers.”† This view of the end of civil government shows that crime ought to be punished, not only because it is inconsistent with the

* Rom. xiii, 3.

† Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 23.

public good, but also because it is opposed to the divine law. It is the duty of the civil ruler as performing the functions of a divinely instituted office, to take care that the end for which it was instituted, be secured by his administration; that the divine glory be promoted by a faithful performance of the functions of his office. A commonly received opinion is, that crime is not punishable by civil rulers as immoral, but only as hurtful to society; that it ought not to be punished because it is wrong, but because of the evil effects which might follow impunity. According to this view society has no right to inflict punishment upon the criminal, otherwise than as an example; "that the moral guilt of an offender" is not cognizable by human authority.

This political dogma veiled though it is by the most specious pretences, is nevertheless destructive to the ends of civil government. The glory of God is directly excluded, and the public good, the only end of society which is taken into view, cannot be obtained by a government which has no higher aim than the good of man. It is one of those false though fascinating principles by which the infidelity of the present age is distinctly marked; the immediate object of which is to exclude God from his own works and institutions, and substitute an infidel philosophy in the room of Christianity.

Society, it is true, does not and cannot measure out to offenders the just retribution of moral evil, nor has God committed this to them. It is his own prerogative to visit sin with the infliction of merited punishment. "For we know him that hath said vengeance belongeth

unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord. And again the Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* But while society may not and cannot punish sin, properly as such, it may and ought to punish overt acts of immorality, as well because they are violations of the moral law of God, as because they are injurious to the public weal. The infidel tenet which I am now examining, assumes that society has a right to punish crime, but it places that right on the principle of expediency or propriety; that it is proper that crime should be punished lest society may be endangered by impunity. But the reader will observe that the primary principle on which society is authorized to inflict punishment on offenders is a regard to the Divine glory. The difference, and it is an essentially important one is, that the former makes the public welfare the sole principle of exercising the right of punishment, while the latter makes the glory of God the primary principle to which the welfare of society is made subordinate.

The civil magistrate is, in the language of scripture said to be “the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”†. This text proves in the first place, that civil rulers are in their official character, “ministers of God.” And being such, it is their duty to serve him. But do they serve him, it is asked, when they exclude all respect to his glory in a matter of so much importance as the punishment of crime, when they exclude all respect to his law as a ground of its infliction? In the second place it proves that

* Heb. x. 30, 31. † Rom. xiii. 4.

something more than example is designed by the application of punishment in civil society, because the, magistrate is said to be “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.” This implies that punishment is inflicted upon offenders by the civil ministers of God, because of evil which they have done, and not merely as an example. They punish crime because it is a violation of the Divine law, that law under which nations as well as individuals are placed. And this is a part of the national homage which civil society owes to God.

3. The magistrate’s power of punishing immorality is co-extensive with the moral law. It embraces the first as well as the second table of the decalogue. “The magistrate,” says a distinguished writer of the seventeenth century, “may and ought to be both *custos et vindex utriusque tabulæ*; he might to preserve both the first and second tables of the holy and good law of God from being despised and violated, and punish by corporal or other temporal punishments—such as openly dishonor God by gross offences, either against the first or second table; and this he doth as God’s deputy and vicegerent subordinate and subservient to that universal dominion which God Almighty exerciseth over the children of men.”*

Many professed Christians, who readily concede to the civil magistrate the power of punishing disobedience to the second table of the decalogue, maintain in opposition to the view now stated, that the magistrate has no power of punishing disobedience to the first table. This limitation of his power is arbitrary; it has

* Aaron’s rod blossoming, &c. pp. 261, 262.

no foundation in the nature of the case, or in the authority of scripture. No satisfactory reason is given why theft or murder may be punished by society, and atheism or idolatry may not. It is in vain that the scripture record is searched for such a distinction; it contains none. It is equally in vain to seek the reason in any imagined difference between the first and second table of the law itself, for external acts of disobedience are as easily cognizable in the one case as in the other. Theft is not more within the reach of human authority than idolatry. Sin is properly in the heart of the offender, and of course cannot be reached by human power; but this is so as much in the sin of theft as in that of idolatry. Yet overt acts of immorality come within the legitimate exercise of the magistrate's power whether they may be acts of idolatry or of theft, whether they may be violations of the first or the second table of the law.

There is a remarkable inconsistency frequently discovered on this subject. Some there are who while they strenuously object to the exercise of civil power in relation to the first table of the law, do not object but vindicate the punishment of profane swearing or sabbath breaking, although both of these belong to this part of the decalogue! These two sins are as directly against God, as are the sins of idolatry or atheism; and yet they are offences punishable by the magistrate, in some civil communities; while, at the same time, it is maintained that society has nothing to do with the punishment of offences which are directly against God: Or in other words that society has no right to take cognizance of violations of the first table of the law. The

real ground of objection then, is not because violations of the first table are directly against God, for were this the ground of opposition it would militate equally against the punishment of profane swearing and sabbath breaking, as well as that of atheism and idolatry. This practical fallacy may be traced to the excessive selfishness of society; they respect the law of God so far as it may be useful to them, and no farther: they have no respect to the authority of God speaking to them in his law, or desire to promote his glory in their national relations. And their selfishness is covered by the plausible pretence that they may not assume the right of punishing sins committed directly against God. But all such scruples and difficulties vanish whenever the public welfare is supposed to be concerned. Then there is no apprehension of interfering with a divine prerogative, or encroaching on the consciences of men! The public welfare is thus made paramount to the law, and to the glory of God. The immediate end of civil society is the public good; but this is not the only or even the chief end: the glory of God has the pre-eminence in this as in all things. And it is worthy the consideration of nations, that the former can be permanently and thoroughly secured, only by giving the latter the first place, as the principle of national action.

The objection to the punishment by society of certain immoralities, while admitted in respect of others, supposes a distinction which does not exist: it supposes that violations of the second table of the law are not sins committed directly against God. Now these are as directly against him as are violations of the first ta-

ble. Dishonesty is as immediately a transgression of the divine law as is idolatry or any other precept which it contains. And I may here state, that idolatry and atheism, and other immoralities that do not immediately terminate on society, are in their effects most pernicious to its welfare; so that were the principle of punishing whatever is injurious to society fully carried out, violations of the first table as well as those of the second would be punishable by society. Because the welfare of society is affected by the one as well as the other.

The primary reason why all overt acts of immorality are punishable by society, is that they are opposed to the will and the glory of God, for the manifestation of which civil government has been instituted. The secondary reason is the injury done to society; the latter is indeed the immediate, but the former is the ultimate and pre-eminent ground of inflicting punishment.

It is supposed to be incompatible with the rights of conscience, for society to punish transgressions of the first and second precepts of the decalogue. In the first place, this takes for granted that men have the right to follow the dictates of their consciences, irrespective of the lawfulness of the thing about which conscience is exercised. Now man has no such right. God has not given to conscience the prerogative of resisting his law; it is under law to God. The moral law is addressed to the conscience as well as the understanding and will of man. If a man's conscience disapproves of the law, and refuses subjection to it, he commits sin. No pretence of conscience can absolve a man from the

charge of sin, if he denies the being of God or worships him through the medium of images or pictures. In the one case he is an atheist, and in the other an idolater, whatever judgment his conscience may pronounce in the matter. So long however as atheism and idolatry are subjects of belief only in a man's own mind, they are not punishable by human power. A man's mind is in this respect his kingdom. And to God alone is he responsible for the exercise of its powers. To attempt to force upon him doctrines of faith would be persecution. To God only is he answerable for the doctrines which he believes; and God alone has the right to dictate to his faith.

But though society has no right to dictate to the subjects of government the articles of their religious belief, and may not presume to inflict punishments because of matters of faith, yet it has a right to punish overt acts of immorality. This right extends to one precept of the law as well as to another. Conscience cannot be reasonably urged in vindication of an overt act of idolatry. Nor is the punishment of such an act any encroachment on the rights of conscience. Is it said that a man may believe that it is his duty to worship God through the medium of images; and that therefore it is persecution to restrain him by penal laws? I answer, shall the law of God be abrogated and civil society seriously injured, because men choose to reject the plain dictates of divinely revealed obligation? Is the law of God so unintelligible, are its precepts so obscure, that such a plea may be reasonably offered and sustained? Were it set up in relation to the transgression of some

other precept of the law, the very men who urge it in behalf of idolaters would be the first to deride it as foolish and wicked. Were the thief or the murderer, for example, to plead immunity from punishment on the ground of conscience, would any man of sound mind admit the plea? Would it be listened to in a court of justice? Is not idolatry as obvious and palpable a violation of a precept of the decalogue as either theft or murder? Why the latter should be restrained by penal laws, and the former permitted, no reason can be given but this, that society values its own supposed interests more than the divine glory.

Thugism furnishes a pertinent illustration of this view of the subject. The Thugs who form part of the Hindoo system, commit murder and robbery under the sacred name of religion, and as a part of its rites! Now if liberty of conscience is plead as a reason why idolaters may not be restrained from violating the second precept of the decalogue, I cannot conceive how the same plea may not be urged in behalf of the worshippers of Thuggee. Popery, that “man of sin” that “sitteth in the temple of God” is an idolatrous system. By the use of images and pictures its votaries violate the second precept, while the votaries of Thuggee violate the sixth precept of the decalogue. But what is the difference in point of principle? May not the Thug plead liberty of conscience to commit murder, as well as the papist to commit idolatry? What right has society to punish the transgression of the sixth, and yet refuse to punish the transgression of the second precept of the law? Has God made any such distinc-

tion? When God instituted civil government, and armed the magistrate with power to punish crime, did he say to him in respect of part of the law, thou shalt “not bear the sword in vain,” but in respect of another part of it “thou shalt not execute judgment?” If God has not made, this distinction who may, who dare? Is it said that murder is a crime against society, and idolatry a sin against God; and therefore the former ought to be punished by man, but that the latter may not? I deny both the premises and the conclusion. The distinction is a mere fiction; it has no foundation either in reason or in scripture. Both of these are crimes against society, as well as sins against God. Idolatry is as certainly and fatally injurious to the welfare of society as is murder. It was idolatry that brought down the wrath of God upon the Jews. As the punishment of this sin they were held in captivity seventy years. And as the punishment of this sin the empire of the ten tribes was dissolved. The fatal effects of idolatry upon society are not so readily perceived by irreligious statesmen, as those of murder, and the reason is they are ignorant and regardless of the written law of God. In the prosecution of a short-sighted and ruinous policy they neglect and despise one of the most important duties of government. A duty which if neglected is always followed by national misery and ruin!

SECTION VI.

THE DUTIES OF A CIVIL GOVERNMENT CONTINUED.

IV. The support of religion.

National prosperity is not only intimately but inseparably connected with religion. The most important means of a nation's welfare is neglected if no provision is made for its maintenance. On this view of the subject it is presumed all Christians will most readily unite. True religion is the main-stay of national security. Neither political sagacity, military prowess, nor commercial success, nor all of them combined, can impart to a nation either stability or that amount of happiness which it may obtain through the influence of religion. But while the value of religion may be admitted, as the most important means of securing national permanence and prosperity, yet all Christians will not so cordially agree in respect of the support which religion ought to have from government. It is the design of this section to show that it is the duty of a nation to furnish the means of supporting religion. The support intended is not that which may be obtained from the voluntary liberality of individuals, but that which is secured by national provision.

Such provision has met with the most decided hostility from many who feel an interest I have no doubt in the advancement of true religion, and in their country's welfare. But however honest in design they are mis-

taken in principle; their hostility is an indirect opposition to religion, and in favor of infidelity. Nor in this connexion can the fact be safely overlooked, that infidels and half-infidels cordially unite against all national support of religion. May not this originate in hostility to the truth of the gospel itself? The association is so uniform and so intimate that it would argue reckless inattention to overlook it altogether. I doubt not that infidels dislike the idea of a national support of religion, because of the increased probability which it furnishes for advancing the interests of Christianity; while national neglect of this duty is likely to produce a general indifference to it, and thus tend indirectly to the growth of infidelity! It is difficult if not impossible to account for the evident interest taken by infidels in this controversy, and for the fact that they uniformly oppose, and generally with great bitterness, a national maintenance of religion. If it is so injurious to the interests of true religion, it is astonishing that the lynx-eye of infidelity has not ascertained the fact, which it has not done, for then the public support of religion would not be opposed, but countenanced as supplying a hope that the church of God, which infidels hate with unmitigated rancor, would thereby suffer. The course pursued by infidels in other things harmonizes with this presumption. For example, while they hate the Christian religion, the hatred is generally in proportion to the conformity which its professors maintain to the scriptures; while a departure from this fountain of truth receives infidel sympathy. Hence the favorable feeling which they have towards popery. Indeed, as this or any other

corrupt system recedes from the simplicity of Christian truth, it obtains the sympathy and partial respect of infidels. Such professed Christians as are opposed to a national provision for religion, should seriously ponder whether they do not in this matter indirectly oppose religion itself, and give countenance to national infidelity.

The following arguments are adduced to show that it is the duty of a civil government to make a national provision for the support of religion.

1. The example of the Jewish commonwealth.

It is not necessary to offer proof of this fact, for in relation to this there is no diversity of opinion; those who are opposed to such provision admit the fact that in one period of the history of the church, religion was supported by a national provision sanctioned by divine authority.

The fact is admitted, but the obligation to imitate the example in New Testament times is denied. The ground of objection is the peculiarity of the Jewish system.

But it is no satisfactory answer to say that the Jewish dispensation was different from the Christian, or even that it was remarkably peculiar. The peculiarity may be admitted without admitting the conclusion. Many things belonging to that dispensation may have been of a peculiar, and therefore only temporary character; but it does not follow that it was so entirely peculiar that the present dispensation can have nothing in common with it; and as the two dispensations may have some points in common, one of these may be a national provision for the support of religion. The mere pecu-

liarity of the Jewish system does not then determine the point at issue; it remains still to be determined whether this is or is not a part of that peculiarity. If it were proved that it is, the controversy would be at an end; but I hope that I shall be able to show that there is nothing peculiar in it: that it is a matter common to both dispensations.

There are two false positions assumed in this controversy, for the purpose of making out such a peculiarity of the state of things among the Jews as may render their example unfit for imitation under the Christian dispensation. On these two assumptions depends the whole force of the objection against the example of the Jewish commonwealth. It is necessary then to examine with some minuteness these false assumptions.

In the first place, it is said that the Jewish commonwealth was a theocracy; and being a theocracy, the national provision made by it for the support of religion is not to be imitated. "It is a case," say the opponents of a national support of religion, "that does not come within the range of the imitable." This is a mere assumption, for the truth of which the slightest evidence is not adduced. The Jewish commonwealth was in a certain sense a theocracy; but there is no perceivable connexion between this fact and the conclusion, that the provision made by it for supporting religion "does not come within the range of the imitable." The premises and the conclusion are not connected by any logical relation: the former are true, but the latter does not follow from them, though true. It is admitted that in a certain sense the Jewish civil government was theo-

cratic, but how can this affect the duty of making a national provision for religion? The objection takes for granted that such provision was a positive arrangement that perished with the theocracy to which it had been appended, but no proof is offered of this.

Further, it is necessary to inquire whether the Jewish commonwealth was a theocracy in the sense assumed in the objection. That the system was given immediately by God, and that the constitution upon which it was administered was dictated by him, is conceded. But this is not what is meant by those who object. They mean that God stood to that people in the relation of being their king or first magistrate! This is not conceded. From the days of Samuel onwards, the Jewish people had kings like the nations around them; and before this period they had chief magistrates known by the name of judges. Indeed Moses, the first of these magistrates, is called in scripture by the names king and lawgiver. "Moses commanded us a law; even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together."* The Jewish theocracy, then, did not consist in God's bearing to that people the same relation which in other governments is borne by their chief magistrates. An intimate acquaintance with that system shows that there is indeed far less difference between it and a scripturally constituted government in New Testament times than is generally supposed. In New Testament times the canon of scripture is completed; and this fur-

* Deut. xxxiii. 4, 5; and Numb. xxi. 18.

nishes a perfect directory for the constituting and administering of civil government. To supply the want of the written word which the Jews had not in a completed state, God gave to them an oral revelation of his will. When the Jews were first constituted into a civil community, there was no written revelation; and for ages afterwards there was none but the writings of Moses, and perhaps the book of Joshua; an oral revelation was therefore necessary. And this necessity respected the church as well as the civil community of the Jews. The difference between the Jewish commonwealth and a scripturally constituted government in New Testament times, lies mainly in this, that the former was directed partly by oral instructions, the latter by a completed canon of written revelation. But there is no difference of principle: the principle of government and the rule by which it is directed is one and the same, *then* and *now*. Any objection to the example of the Jewish commonwealth, on account of its being a theocracy is inconclusive.

In the second place, I call the attention of the reader to a distinction which though of great importance in this inquiry, has been most strangely overlooked by those who are opposed to a national provision for religion; namely, the distinction between true religion and the administration of it among the Jews. These though distinct, have been confounded in the arguments used against such provision. True religion is one and the same in all ages of the world: it was the religion of God's covenant people during the former, as it is of God's covenant people under the present dispensation.

It is that religion which has for its foundation the perfect righteousness of the Son of God in human nature, which has for its end the salvation of sinners in virtue of that perfect righteousness, and by which homage is given to the true God, in faith of Christ the one Mediator between God and man.

The dispensation or outward administration of religion is changed in part; but religion itself has undergone no change. The former administration was adapted to the circumstances of the church. The death of Christ, by which atonement was to be made for sinners was yet future, and to direct their faith to him as the only Saviour, a system of typical ordinances was appointed by divine authority. The Savior having now come, that typical system is no longer necessary; the atonement of Christ is now matter of record to which the faith of believers may be directed without the aid of types. A great part of the worship of the Jews was as moral as that of the present dispensation. Their worship in the synagogue, in the family, or in the closet had as little of a typical character, as the public, family, or secret worship of Christians have. It was a pure spiritual worship. The typical part of the Jewish system was concentrated in the temple service. This is now done away; the shadow has given place to the substance. But the religion which was administered by it, in part at least, remains; the administration was temporary, but religion itself is not: the former has ceased but the latter continues, and shall continue unchanged, till every redeemed soul be brought to glory.

The distinction between true religion and the admi-

nistration of it during a particular dispensation, is as obvious as that which exists between a person and the garment with which he may be clothed. The garment may be changed a thousand times, but this would not affect the identity of the person. Neither does the change of administration affect the identity of true religion. It is the same now that it was when the church was first constituted in the garden of Eden; when salvation through the cross of Christ was first revealed in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head! Inattention to this essential, as well as obvious distinction, has led to the adoption of one of the most strongly urged objections, in opposition to the example of the Jewish commonwealth.

"The national church of Israel," says one of the most accomplished opponents of a national provision for religion, "was through the whole period of its continuance, (though with frequent fluctuations and occasional intervals of comparative purity, on which the mind reposes with pleasure, like the eye on oases in the desert,) in a state of great mixture and corruption."* In a similar style this writer goes on to depict in bold contrast, the spirituality of the New Testament dispensation with the carnal and worldly character of the former, and with much self-complacency asks, "what then is their conduct who insist on our adopting the national constitution of the Jewish church as a precedent for our imitation?" There is in this quotation a remarkable instance of the fallacy to which I have referred, namely, the confounding of religion with its administration!

* Dr. Wardlaw.

And in addition to this there is another still more glaring fallacy; that is, the confounding of the corruptions and wickedness of professors of religion with religion itself!

The typical part of the Jewish administration of religion was only the "shadow of good things to come," but this was good as a divinely appointed system of means for leading the faith of God's people to the promised Saviour; and as such every well regulated mind "reposes on it with pleasure." It does not become a Christian, far less a Christian minister, to use such language respecting a divine institution as that used in the above quotation. The only apology that can be admitted is, that in the warmth of controversial writing the author has *confounded the wickedness of the Jews with the divinely instituted system under which they lived*. But religion itself as existing in the hearts of God's people, and as developed in their lives, was as pure and spiritual during the former dispensation as it is now or ever shall be on earth. In an entire disregard of this however, the author asks "what then is their conduct who insist on our adopting the national constitution of the Jewish church as a precedent for our imitation?" The language in which this question is expressed is loose and ambiguous. The Jewish is identical with the Christian church, and has one and the same constitution; but the question implies that they are distinct, and have different constitutions. But it is presumed that the writer meant by constitution the administration peculiar to the Jewish economy; this implies however a distinction which he and other writers on the same

side of the controversy generally disregard. If this is meant, and it is the only sense in which the question can be understood to have any connexion with the subject, then I say that the question unfairly assumes that those who plead for a national support of religion “insist” that the Jewish administration is “a precedent for imitation.” Now no such precedent is insisted on, nor even proposed; and to assume this as true is a misrepresentation of the views of those to whom in this controversy they are opposed. That which is insisted on “as a precedent for imitation,” is neither the peculiarity of the Jewish administration, nor the wickedness of those who lived under it. That which is urged as an example is the national provision for religion made by the Jewish commonwealth. This has nothing to do with the peculiarities of any dispensation; it is common to religion in all times and places. Visible religion requires visible means of supporting it. The public ordinances of religion demand the services of suitably qualified ministers. These, like other men need food and raiment, and other necessities of life. It is the law of equity, as well as a scriptural maxim, that they “which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar. Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”* The building and keeping in repair places of worship also require pecuniary means. Here then is one settled point, the public ministration of religion requires pecuniary resources; and this is common to all the dispensations of true religion.

This reduces the inquiry to very narrow limits,—re-

* 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

ligion must be supported! By whom? By individuals, or by the whole community? Is it more worldly and carnal to draw this support from the nation than from individual gift? It is impossible to prove that it is so. To assert it is not only to take for granted the point at issue, but also to charge, indirectly indeed, yet not less truly, the Head of the church with having appointed a carnal and worldly means of supporting religion. It is of no avail here to reply, that the means were adapted to the former but not to the present dispensation of the church. Because it is merely begging the question without even pretending to offer proof. On the other hand, it is evident from what has been said, that the means of obtaining the provision is not and cannot be more consistent with one dispensation than with another, for it relates to a matter that is common to all dispensations of religion.

To support true religion is a moral duty, and of course cannot in the least degree be affected by difference of administration. By divine appointment the church obtained a national support from the Jewish commonwealth. The example thus furnished is obligatory upon every nation enjoying the light of Christian truth; and obligatory because it is a moral duty.

I do not stop to inquire whether the provision made by the divine law could be enforced by compulsory measures. Because the inquiry is irrelevant, and does not affect in the least the weight of the example. It ought too to be taken for granted that a divine command is obligatory without quibbling about the power to enforce it by compulsory measures.

The mode of raising the national support of religion, and the amount raised may have been peculiar to the Jewish commonwealth. Perhaps it may be more advantageous to draw it from the public treasury than directly from the soil; and perhaps one-tenth is not necessary. But neither the amount nor the mode of raising it forms any part of the obligation. In relation to neither of these is the example of the Jewish commonwealth obligatory. These may be varied according to the varied circumstances of a community: a tenth of the produce of the soil may not be necessary, or it might even be oppressive in some circumstances, or it might be inconvenient to obtain it immediately from the soil. In both of these respects the arrangement of the Jewish commonwealth was settled on principles of perfect equity; principles adapted to their peculiar state of society: but in a community with more of a commercial and less of an agricultural character equity may require a different arrangement. A national provision for the support of religion is the duty inculcated by the example of the Jewish commonwealth without reference to peculiarity of circumstances; these may modify the details of the arrangement, but the example itself holds up for imitation the universal moral principle, that it is the duty of a civil community to make a competent provision for the maintenance of true religion within the national domain.

“Although” says Dr. Owen “the institutions and examples of the Old Testament, of the duty of magistrates, in the things and about the worship of God, are not in their whole latitude and extent to be drawn into

rules that should be obligatory to all magistrates now under the administration of the gospel; yet doubtless there is something moral in these institutions, which being unclothed of their Judaical form, is still binding to all in the like kind, as to some analogy and proportion; subduct from those administrations what was proper to and lies upon the account of the church and nation of the Jews, and what remains upon the general notion of a church and nation must be everlastingly binding. And this amounts thus far at least, that judges, rulers, and magistrates, which are promised under the New Testament, to be given in mercy and to be of singular usefulness as the judges were under the old, are to take care that the gospel church may in its concernment as such, be supported and promoted, and the truth propagated wherewith they are entrusted; as the others took care that it might be well with the Judaical church as such.”*

II. Prophecy reveals that in New Testament times nations would provide for the support of religion.

1. “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”†

The mountain of the Lord’s house is the church of God, “the stone that smote the image and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.”‡ The mountains and hills upon which the church is to be established, and above which, it is to be exalted are the

* Owen’s kingdom of Christ and the magistrate’s power, p. 445. Ed. 1721.

† Is. ii. 2.

‡ Dan. ii. 35.

nations and many people spoken of in the third verse, as saying "let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob."* It is not superiority alone that is predicated of the church in this scripture; that is indeed expressed by the word "exalted:" But something more is included by the use of the additional expression "shall be established on the tops of the mountains," It would be difficult if not impossible to say what is meant by being "established" in this connexion, if it does not mean that the church shall receive from these nations a national provision for her support. It is not the establishing of the church in her spiritual privileges; for in this sense she is established by the Lord Jesus Christ, and upon himself, and "other foundations can no man lay."

2. "And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."† The context determines two things in relation to this prophecy. First, that it is the church that is addressed, and to whom the promise is made. In the second place, it is the converted Gentile nations, that shall by their respective governments perform the duty of "foster-fathers" to the church. This identifies the promise with the gospel dispensation. An attempt has been

* A similar prophecy is given in Mic. iv. 1, and in the very words of Isaiah, which by the general opinion of commentators, as well Jewish as Christian, is applied to the times of the Messiah.

† Is. xlix. 23.

made to invalidate this as an argument for a national support of religion, on the ground that "kings" are not here spoken of in their public character as rulers, but only in their private character as members of the church. This however cannot be yielded, it is a mere assumption. On the contrary it is maintained that this text speaks of kings as public functionaries: and the employment of an official title is held *prima facie* evidence that the *officer* is spoken of and not the *man*. The only show of argument in opposition to this is, that as the queens spoken of are only the wives or consorts of kings, and having therefore no public or official character, the kings also can only be understood as spoken of in their private condition. It is so, that because the consorts of kings, and other illustrious persons who may not hold public office, give the influence of their exalted standing in society, and their pecuniary means for the support of religion, that kings and other civil rulers must be understood as spoken of in their private capacity? May not kings be understood as spoken of in their official character, while their consorts are spoken of as private individuals, both in their respective places aiding in the support of the church, the one as the nation's representative, and the other in her private condition?

As no satisfactory reason has been given why kings should not be understood as spoken of in their official characters when they are spoken of by their official titles, this prophecy may fairly be understood as predicated an official act.

To be nursing or "foster-fathers" implies two things, which civil rulers as the representatives of a nation are

to do for the church. First, they should protect her from outward attacks made upon her rights and privileges; recognizing her as the church of Christ, and giving her as such the protection to which every individual in her is entitled as a citizen. In the second place, they should provide the means of supporting the gospel. The primary ideas implied in the language "nursing-fathers" are those of protection and support. Take away these and the language has no meaning, nor the church any encouragement from the prophecy! Admit the duty included in these ideas, but apply it to kings in their private stations, then it is not kings or civil rulers that are "nursing-fathers."

Of the same import is the following prophecy: "Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and thou shalt suck the breasts of kings, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."*

It would only be a waste of argument to offer illustration of a scripture so plain as this, where the idea of a national support of religion is so obviously implied. If sucking the breasts of kings does not include this, it would be difficult to find language to express it, and more difficult still to extract any other meaning out of the prophecy. Support is the only thing spoken of, and it cannot be understood of any other than a national support of religion. The literal translation given by Dr. Lowth shows that it cannot be understood of civil

* Is. lx. 16. "Thou shalt also suck the milk of the nations even at the breasts of kings shalt thou be fostered." Lowth's translation.

rulers personally, for the church is said to suck the milk of nations, as well as to be fostered at the breasts of kings. The good promised is to be conferred through the medium of nations; they are to furnish for the church support and protection, even as an affectionate nurse cherishes and fosters the tender infant committed to her care.

3. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him."*

Whatever reference this psalm may have had to Solomon, it could only have had as he was a type of Christ. In the latter it has its proper fulfillment. Indeed, there is room for questioning whether there may be any reference to Solomon at all in the psalm. It is enough for my argument to show that it has its proper and ultimate accomplishment in Christ; and happily here there can be no dispute; for he "that shall save the souls of the needy" and "shall redeem," them "from deceit and violence" is none else than the Saviour of sinners. The reader needs not be told that "presents and gifts" cannot be given to Christ personally. He needs not "the gold of Sheba." But the gift of this may be made to the church, which is his body. She while in the world needs pecuniary means for the maintenance of the ordinances of religion; and that is the very thing here promised, and that shall be fully realized when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord" and "all nations shall call them blessed."

* Psalm lxxii. 10, 11.

In the mean time it illustrates the duty of nations in relation to the church. And that duty performed will be an important means of hastening the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

4. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."*

The kingdoms of this world are ungodly nations and states; particularly those of the Roman anti-christian powers of Europe. It is predicated of these immoral powers that they shall become "the kingdoms of our Lord." To understand what is intended by this, the best way is to consider what they have been and are before they are reformed. "These," says John in another part of the apocalypse "have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. For God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."† Hitherto they have given their power, influence and support to maintain civil misrule, and a worldly system of religion, in the form of popish anti-christianism. Now, however, they are become "the kingdoms of our Lord"—righteous civil governments, giving their power, influence, and pecuniary resources for the support of the church of Christ in the world.

The following quotations harmonize with the exposition which I have now given. "The civil kingdoms of this world, after fearful shakings and desolations, shall be disposed of into useful subserviency to the interest, power and kingdom of Jesus Christ: hence they are

* Rev. xi. 15.

† Rev. xvii. 13, 17.

said to be his kingdoms, that is to be disposed of for the behoof of his interest, rule, and dominion: when the nations which are in opposition to Zion are broken, their gain shall be consecrated to the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.”* “True religion now comes to be formally avowed by them in their political capacity. They understand, profess, and they support, not a state religion, nor a worldly sanctuary, but the pure religion of the Bible, in a consistent manner.”†

5. “And the nations of them that are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.”‡

The church is the subject spoken of in this prophecy, and into which the glory and honor of kings and nations shall be brought. But the most judicious commentators differ in their opinions, whether it may refer to the church militant or the church triumphant. One applies it to the church on earth, another to the church in heaven. And reasonable arguments are not wanting to recommend both opinions. After the most mature deliberation, I have come to the conclusion that while both are partly right, both are also partly wrong. I have therefore adopted a middle course, explaining the passage as partly applicable to the one state, and partly to the other. The perfection which is predicated of the church in this connection, with the absence of all the external ordinances of religion seem to say that it refers to the heavenly state. But there are reasons on

* Owen’s kingdom of Christ, p. 433.

† McLeod’s Lectures on the Revelation, p. 201.

‡ Rev. xxi. 24, 26.

the other hand which render an entire reference to heaven impossible. First, it is the same state of the church that is described in the prophecy of Isaiah; and almost in the same words.* But Isaiah evidently speaks of the church in her militant state. Secondly, into the heavenly state kings shall bring neither glory nor honor. There they shall receive, but not communicate these. Nor shall they be known as such in heaven. And nations shall not exist heaven in their national relations, and of course can neither give nor receive glory. For these reasons this scripture must be explained in part at least, of the church on earth; while the highly wrought description of perfection which is given clearly intimates that it is in heaven only that it shall obtain a complete fulfillment. If the exposition which I have given is the correct one, the passage holds out the promise that the church shall receive national support from kings and nations: the honor and glory which they are to bring into the church does not admit of any other application.

6. I call the reader's attention to one other prophecy only on this subject. Ezekiel in the forty-fifth and following chapters of his prophecy speaks of a future glorious state of the church. He describes the sanctuary, its worship and all the ordinances of religion; and states most distinctly the national provision which shall be made for the support of religion.

Ezekiel prophesied during the captivity, but this part of the prophecy cannot refer to the restoration of the Jews to their own land, nor to any thing that has yet

* Is. lx. 19, 20, 16.

taken place in the history of that people. No such division of the land of Judah as is here described has yet been made; nor does any part of the description find its realization in any thing that has yet taken place. The fulfillment of the prophecy is still future. According to the edict of Cyrus the Jews only, or the two tribes returned; but this speaks of a period when all the tribes of Israel shall have portions in the land.^{SS*} The Old Testament language which is employed by the prophet is no objection to this view of the prophecy. The worship of the New Testament dispensation is expressed by language peculiar to the former dispensation; but this was unavoidable, for it could not have been made intelligible to the Jewish people in any other way: they could not have understood what was meant had other language been used. They had no idea of the worship of the true God, otherwise than as expressed in the language of their own dispensation. Hence the necessity of using such language to express the worship of God at a future period, though the manner of worship should have become much more simple in its character. Even the New-Testament writers occasionally use such language long after the gospel dispensation had been introduced. Familiar as they were with the former they had no difficulty in adapting its peculiar language to the worship of the latter. "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God," says Paul, "that ye *present your bodies a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God. By him therefore let us *offer the sacrifice* of praise to God continually. And we have an *altar* whereof they have no right to eat who serve the

* See the forty-eighth chapter throughout.

tabernacle.”* And John, sixty years after the introduction of the Christian dispensation, describes the church as much in the style of the Old Testament as does Ezekiel. “And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood saying, rise, and measure *the temple* of God and *the altar*, and them that worship therein. But the *court* which is without *the temple* leave out.”† The use of Old Testament language in describing the church and her worship is no ways inconsistent with the application of Ezekiel’s prophecy to New Testament times. The instances which I have given of the use of similar language by the apostles remove all difficulty on this point. “Moreover, when ye divide by lot the land for inheritance ye shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, an holy portion of the land; the length shall be the length of five and twenty reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand: this shall be holy in all the border thereof round about. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, and the most holy place.”‡ It is obvious that this scripture refers to the gospel period; and contains a magnificent description of the church of God when she shall have put on her “beautiful garments” and become “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.”§

* Rom. xii. 1. Heb. xiii. 15.

† Rev. xi, 1, 2.

‡ Ezek. xlv. 1, 3.

§ Qua propter manifestum hic argumentum habemus, non posse hæc intelligi de terra Cananæa, et duodecim tribibus Israel secundum litteram, sed de spirituali Cananæa, ecclesia Christi, deque Israele secundum prommissionem, veris fidelibus intelligenda esse. Duodecim ergo tribus sunt omnes fideles. De materiali templo et externo cultu explicavi non possunt.—Michælis on the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel.

This argument does not derive its value simply from the fact that a national support of religion is the subject of prophecy. Because many things are foretold which are hurtful and sinful. Prophecy in such cases only intimates the certainty of the events foretold, but is no pledge of their goodness. The argument now urged derives its value from the consideration that the prophecies adduced in proof are revealed to the church as the ground of encouragement and hope. That they are indeed promises of good which God will bestow on the church. They are spoken of with the most evident approbation, and may with the utmost propriety therefore be adduced in evidence of the duty of nations to provide publicly for the support of religion.

III. Nations are bound to provide for the support of religion because they are moral persons.

There are duties peculiar to individuals, and which societies are incapable of performing; but all duties which societies are capable of performing are as obligatory upon them as upon individuals. It is the duty of individuals to promote the interests of religion by every proper and accessible means. To furnish pecuniary aid is one of the most obvious means of supporting religion. The ordinances of the gospel cannot be maintained without such means; and nations being moral persons are bound to see that such means are provided. "If all men" says Vattel, "are bound to serve God, the entire nation in her national capacity is doubtless obliged to serve and honor him."* It is unquestionably the duty of individuals to give, and that liberally, for

* Law of Nations, p. 57.

the maintenance of the ordinances of religion; but certainly it is not for the advantage of religion that its support be wholly dependent upon spontaneous individual liberality. This is too uncertain, and often too capriciously furnished to be safely relied on. Hence the necessity of a national supervision to provide means for the regular administration of the ordinances of religion. This national supervision does not interfere with individual obligation. The former from the nature of the case must be a general provision: this leaves ample scope in the best supposable case, for the exercise of individual liberality. An analogous case illustrates this. A general provision is made by law for the support of the poor; but sufficient room is left notwithstanding for the promptings of individual charity, enough still to excite the emotions of human sympathy. So is it in the case of religion, while a general provision is made by a nation for its support there will still remain sufficient opportunity for individual obligation.

The commands and threatenings which the scriptures contain in relation to the duty of nations to serve God, all proceed on the principle of their being moral persons. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."* And again, "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall utterly perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."† The moral personality of nations is taken for granted in these and similar scriptures; and therefore

* Ps. ii. 10, 11, 12. † Is. lx. 12.

are they commanded to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and threatened if they do not, with utter destruction. I admit that the scriptures quoted include more than a national provision for religion: they include all the homage which nations owe to the Mediator, and which are expressed by the commands "serve the Lord" and "kiss the Son." But part of the service and homage which they owe him is to provide for the maintenance of religion in their respective jurisdictions. What homage will a nation render to the Mediator that refuses to make such provision? What service will they do for him? It is an undeniable fact that nations who refuse to provide for the support of religion also refuse all homage and service whatever to the Mediator. They assume the principle, that as nations they have nothing to do with the Mediator or the Christian religion: and indeed this is the practical result of declining the authority of the written word of God as the rule of civil government. Let this rule be acknowledged and acted upon and nations will perceive the obligation "to serve the Lord," and provide also for the support of religion as an obvious part of that service. A writer formerly referred to, as opposed to this view of the subject, speaking of the service commanded in the second psalm, says "Jehovah, who in the beginning of the psalm laughs at the puny efforts of their vain and weak audacity, does not in the close of it bespeak the aid of their official functions, but warns them of their own danger, and admonishes them for their own sake to timely submission."* True, Jehovah does not "bespeak

* Wardlaw.

the aid" as this writer sneeringly expresses it, of civil rulers; but if he does not "bespeak" their aid as little does he "bespeak" the aid of individuals. In respect of "aid" Jehovah is independent of both; as independent of individual as of national aid. But he has made it the duty of nations to make a public provision for the support of religion, for he has commanded them to do so, and threatens to destroy them if they disregard the command. The rulers of the earth are called indeed "to timely submission," but is this all? Are they merely to cease hostilities against the Lord and his anointed? Is this mere negative homage all that is intended? Most certainly not! To serve the Lord includes the *doing* of something. To kiss the Son too, includes the *doing* of something. This last is the symbol of homage, and the former is the duty which arises out of the homage which they are commanded to give. "This psalm" says Grotius "exhorts all kings to give reverence to the Son of God; that is, that they show themselves to be his ministers, which they indeed are."*

IV. The ends to be accomplished by civil government demonstrate the obligation of nations to provide for the support of religion.

The ends intended by civil government are two: the glory of God, and the good of society. It would be dangerous in its consequences, as it is wrong in principle, to attempt a separation of these. It is not to be supposed that God "for whom are all things, and by

* Is autem psalmus reges omnes hortatur ut Dei filium venerabundi suscipiant; hoc est, ut se ministros ei exhibeant, quia reges sunt scilicet. De jure belli ne pacis.

whom all things” were made, would permit in his providence a state of things long to continue in which the manifestation of his glory had no part! The reason why so many nations great and powerful have been destroyed, is, they were ungodly. But this is a kind of wisdom which statesmen have yet to learn before states and empires can attain stability and permanence. Civil rulers must be taught that as the ministers of God they ought to exercise government with the design of promoting his glory in society.

It is the duty of government to provide for the moral training and culture of the community, especially of the young, by encouraging education, endowing schools and colleges, watching over their interests with parental solicitude, and taking care that the young shall be educated so as to make them good men and useful citizens. To attain this the reading of the scriptures must be made a prominent part of ordinary school education. To refuse the scriptures a place in common schools is directly to encourage and strengthen the growth of infidelity. Education can never be safely separated from Christian principle. For this reason a national provision for religion should embrace a provision for national education. The latter is an important part of the former. There is an inconsistency on the part of some who while they are friendly to a public provision for schools, are opposed to a public provision for the support of religion. The objection made against the latter may with equal propriety be made against the former, unless schools are so conducted as to have no reference to the Christian religion; and then it might be doubted whe-

ther they would be ultimately any advantage to a community.

The immediate end of civil government is the good of society; but this is most perfectly attained where the glory of God is kept in view as the ultimate end. The welfare of society can never be secured irrespective of this. The attainment of the ends of civil government require that provision should be made for Christian instruction and education. Immorality and crime will thus be most surely prevented, and to prevent is incomparably better than to punish crime. The prevalence of vice, and the general corruption of society necessarily and universally accompany mental debasement and religious ignorance. If it were the design of a government to encourage vice and ruin the happiness of a community, the object could not be gained more effectually than by discountenancing religious education and the regular ministration of divine truth from sabbath to sabbath. Let the places of Christian worship be shut, and the schools closed where the scriptures are read, and the race of infidels reared in such a state of things, would soon demonstrate the folly and wickedness of the policy pursued. Society would soon become a pandemonium. And as a national policy may tend to lessen the means of Christian instruction and education, the same ruinous effects will in part follow. The French revolution and the horrid scenes of blood which followed it, show that it is unwise and dangerous to separate religious principle from national policy. Such a course is as dangerous to the safety and stability of a government, as it is destructive of national happiness. A civil

government fails shamefully in its duty to the community which does not see that the religious instruction of the citizens is secured by a national provision. Were the political and commercial interests of a country neglected by the government, this would be deemed, and that justly too, a satisfactory reason why such an administration should be driven from power, and their places filled by men who would have a regard to their country's welfare. The voice of real or affected patriotism would be raised loud enough to be heard throughout the land. I censure not this, but I do blame the cold indifference, not to say hostility which is almost universally manifested against a national provision for religion. Is this a less important element in a nation's welfare than politics or commerce? This will not be said. Such a provision ought then to be made as would most effectually secure this. I am aware that while the importance of religion is professedly admitted, it is on the other hand denied that a national provision is the most eligible means of diffusing its blessings throughout society. This I shall examine in a subsequent part of the inquiry, and hope that I shall be able to show that it is the only means of securing fully the advantages of religion to a community. But on principles which have already been established I hold that it is the duty of a government to make a public provision for the support of religion. The example of the Jewish commonwealth, and the promises made in Old and New Testament prophecy cannot be despised or neglected without a most criminal dereliction of a duty which a government owes to God and to the best interests of society.

V. Objections considered.

1. It is objected that the New Testament contains no appointment of such provision. The answer to this objection is brief but most satisfactory. The Old Testament is of divine authority as well as the New, and as obligatory in its precepts for our direction in doctrine and practice as the New Testament, in every thing except the peculiarities of the former dispensation. To provide for the maintenance of religion is peculiar to no administration of religion, but common to all. It is a moral principle which is in no ways affected by any change in its outward dispensation. The provision made for the Old Testament church is an example having all the force of a command, for the command though given to the Jewish people, regarded a moral duty, and therefore not peculiar to them, but common to them and us. It is not necessary then that there should be any precept in the New Testament; that which was given in a former dispensation continues in full force. The friends of a public provision for religion, have a right to ask those who are opposed to it, to furnish New Testament authority for the rescinding of the precept which was formerly given. Nothing short of this can affect the argument or form an objection to the duty of a national provision for religion. A merely positive appointment remains in force till it is abrogated. Does the New Testament contain any such rescinding act? Had it been only a positive appointment if not rescinded it would have remained in force; how much more being a moral duty? I am fully aware that it has been said that the support of the gospel by the individual

members of the church under the New Testament is as much a positive institution as any of the ordinances of the gospel, and the ninth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians is referred to as proof. If this were so, Paul must have acted a very unkind and sinful part towards the Corinthians, when he labored among them without receiving any support, as he tells us.* Had it been so, Paul had no right to deprive the Corinthians of such a positive privilege. But the truth is, that while Paul had the right as he says of living by his ministry among them; for reasons of Christian expediency he foregoes his claim, but he did them no injury, which otherwise he must have done on the principle of the objection.

This passage establishes the principle that the minister of the gospel should be rewarded for his spiritual labors, by receiving of carnal things necessary for his external wants, but leaves undetermined by whom this shall be given, whether by individuals or the state.

2. National provision for religion is liable it is said to be abused. It is a settled principle that the abuse of any thing is not a legitimate argument against its use. Were the objection admitted it would destroy every principle of action. For what is it that the corruption of man has not abused and turned to purposes never designed. Men eat and drink to excess; shall then the cravings of hunger and thirst not be gratified, because food and drink are abused by excess? Civil government has often degenerated into despotism and cruel oppression; the sacred right of liberty has some-

* 2 Cor. xi. 9.

times too degenerated into riot and licentiousness; shall then government and liberty be repudiated? Even religion itself has been corrupted and abused to purposes of superstition and idolatry; it has been made the tool of priestly and kingly tyranny; shall all religion then be dispensed with, because some, nay many, have corrupted it? Steamboats and locomotive carriages are run on the Lord's day, and because they are thus abused shall steam power be forever laid aside? The objection is unreasonable, because it urges not against the thing itself but against some misapplication which the corruption of man may make of it. If it could be shown that national provision for religion is in itself an evil, such an objection would be valid, but that men to gratify their own passions may make an evil use of it, is no more an objection than the abuse of government is an objection to government, or the abuse of liberty an objection against liberty.

I plead for no abuse of the principle, I plead for no particular national establishment of religion, but I plead for the principle itself. If any or all the national establishments existing are defective or imperfect, let them be reformed; if they are radically evil let them be destroyed, but do not destroy the principle.

3. The gospel was maintained in the first ages of Christianity without any public provision or countenance.

This objection is much relied on, not only as an objection but an unanswerable argument against all national concern in favor of religion. "God has preserved the church for ages, without national aid, and what he

has done he will do.” If the question was, whether God could preserve and build up the church irrespective of national aid, there would be, indeed could be no dispute. He who created the universe and founded Zion can maintain her in the world without the aid of nations; and so he could irrespective of the aid of individual liberality. The Head of the church is as little dependent on individuals for this, as on nations. His omnipotence and independence is just as much illustrated in the preservation of the church, though she may receive pecuniary support from a nation as if it were received from individuals.

The objection is irrelevant, it puts the dispute on a false issue; the matter in controversy is not whether God can preserve the church with or without a national provision; this is conceded, and never has been denied. If both nations and individuals neglect their duty in this matter, he can and will preserve the church. The question at issue is, has God made it the duty of nations to provide for the support of religion? And if it is their duty, the fact that God has preserved religion in the world while nations neglected their duty, does not absolve them from their obligation.

Were the argument for a national support of religion merely on the ground of expediency, even then the objection would not be valid. What though the church has been preserved and religion prospered without any countenance from the nations. Might it not have been for the interests of religion to have enjoyed such countenance.

It is not, however, a question of expediency but one

of positive duty; a duty which nations owe to the church, and which is not to be neglected because God in his providence will find some other way of supporting religion. The sin of nations is not the less on this account.

4. It is objected that a religious establishment has a tendency to secularize the church.

If this objection means that some churches are secularized in consequence of connection with civil society, this is only an instance of abuse which has already been answered. If the objection means that national establishments necessarily produce secularization of the church, I reply that this is a mere assertion, and meet it with a simple denial. That the objection have force it is necessary to show that this consequence is radically embraced in the principle. This will be found not only difficult but impossible. Did the provision made by the Jewish commonwealth secularize the church during the former dispensation? If it did not the objection falls to the ground; because this shews that national provision may be made without any such consequent effect. To say that it did is to charge God with the evil implied in the objection!

“Is not the church a spiritual society, a kingdom not of this world? Is it not a society composed of spiritual persons, men who believe the truth as it is in Jesus, &c.? Can civil authority either erect or maintain such a society as this? Can it add one member to it which Christ has not added, or bestow one benefit on it which Christ has not bestowed?”* Doubtless the Church is a

* Ecclesiastical establishments considered, pp. 23, 24.

spiritual society, made up of spiritual persons, placed under a spiritual government, and regulated by spiritual laws. But what, I ask, have these questions to do with a national provision for religion? This, like all the arguments and objections on the same side of the subject, takes for granted what ought to be proved. Who denies the spirituality of the church? The most devoted friends of national establishments not only admit but maintain the spirituality of the church, as an essential part of her character. But the question made in the quotation takes for granted that the advocates of establishments of religion do not admit the spirituality of the church; or that such establishments in their very nature imply that the church is not a spiritual, but a mere secular society.

Apart from this is it not evident that the question has no bearing on the subject? Might it not be made with equal propriety against the support of the church by individual liberality? Can individuals "erect or maintain such a society as this?" The warmest advocate of voluntarism will not say they can. The objection, then, is out of place. Is there more spirituality in the pecuniary support given to the church when it comes from individuals than when it comes from the whole community? If there is not, and I presume it will not be said that there is, then the objection has nothing to do with the subject in dispute.

Another opponent, Dr. Wardlaw, while urging in substance the same objection, without taking any notice of the fallacy which it contains, strives to make the objection consistent with the fact that a national esta-

blishment once existed, and that too with divine approbation. This fact stood in the way of the objection; but as he is determined to retain the latter, he disposes of the former in a most singular manner. He maintains the church was comparatively a worldly sanctuary during the former dispensation, but being now more spiritual any such support from the commonwealth would be inconsistent with her spirituality.

5. It is objected that a national provision for religion is inconsistent with justice, the rights of conscience, and private judgment.

That it is unjust because it is the employment of national funds in which all have a common right, to support a church of which all are not members, and in which all have not a common interest. It must be admitted on both sides of this subject, that national resources are to be applied to national purposes; and to such purposes as may promote the national welfare; and that every application productive of national happiness is legitimate. Who determines the application of the national revenue? The nation, through the medium of its representatives, or a minority? If a nation, acting on the Christian principle of representation, devotes part of its wealth to the support of religion, is it an act of injustice? To whom? It cannot be an act of injustice to the nation, because it is a nation's own act; done for its own advantage, and for the purpose of promoting its own happiness and prosperity. Unjust to the minority is it? That cannot be unjust to a *minority* which upon the whole advances the interests and increases the happiness of the greater number. It is an admitted princi-

ple in civil governments where representation prevails, that the greatest amount of good to the greatest number is not only desirable, but the only righteous policy which a government should pursue. Dismiss the principle and act on that of the objection, and the greatest good to the greatest number is sacrificed to the will, and it may be to the ignorant caprice of the few. To the few also is sacrificed the fundamental principle of representative government. The majority of a nation I admit may do wrong as too often they do, but this is not applicable to the view now stated, because the condition of my argument is that the greatest good to the greatest number is produced, and that when properly understood will be admitted as right. But what right, it may be asked in the spirit of the objection, has a majority of the nation, to make such provision for religion? Simply, I answer, on the ground that a national provision will be productive of greater good to the nation than if no such provision was made; and that precisely as is done in all other cases of government. National policy, where even vast sums of money are expended, do not always, and perhaps never receive the approbation of the whole community. Were the objection now under consideration valid, citizens opposed to such policy would have the same right to complain of injustice, because that part of the national wealth represented by them is employed to carry on a system of which they disapprove. It is a question of justice as to the appropriation of money, and if it is unjust to use national resources to support a religious system which promotes the happiness of the nation, then also is it un-

just to use the national resources for the support of a war, however just, because some are opposed to it. The same objection might be made against every appropriation of money. There is no difference in principle whether the money is applied to the support of religion or to some civil purpose. Is the appropriation to promote the welfare and good of the people, then every objection must yield?

The objection proceeds on a fallacy. The resources of a nation are national prosperity and no one has a personal and individual interest in them; they are the property of the whole and to be employed for the good of the whole. In the second part of the objection it is said that a national provision for religion violates conscience and the rights of private judgment.

It would be difficult to understand how it could interfere with conscience or private judgment, unless it is made compulsory upon every one to be a member of the church or to wait on its ministrations. It is conceivable that an oppressive and persecuting government might do something of this kind. Or a tax might be imposed for the purpose of maintaining a particular system of religion, and the payment of the tax avowedly made an acknowledgment of the religious principles taught. In such cases then, indeed violence would be done to conscience and private judgment. But providing for a national support of religion does not do any of these; it leaves private judgment as free as God has made it. Individuals may nevertheless entertain such views of religious doctrine as seems to them agreeable to the word of God, and responsible only to him for

their belief. The rights of conscience are still preserved: no one is compelled to accept of religious ministrations inconsistent with his sense of right, or to give his assent to religious principles which he conscientiously believes to be wrong. The public faith may be correct and he may act a very sinful part in not approving of it, still it would be wrong to compel him to acknowledge and profess it. For his religious belief, so long as he does not injure society by expressing and propagating it, he is responsible to God alone. But while it would justly be styled persecution to compel men to profess and submit to what they did not believe, yet there is no persecution, no infringement of private judgment or rights of conscience, to apply part of the public property for the support of a particular faith, though there may be a minority who do not approve of that faith. Quakers, and peace men believe that it is wrong to wage war; it is part of the religious belief of the former, but it is ever esteemed a violation of their private judgments or of their consciences, for a nation of which they are a part, to declare war? They may lay their views before the public; but if the nation act otherwise are they persecuted or in any way personally wronged? The cases are perfectly parallel. No objection can be urged against the former on the ground of conscience, that might not with equal propriety be urged against the latter; yet no one supposes that violence is done to the consciences of Quakers, though a government may find it necessary to maintain a lawful war.

6. It is said to encroach on the prerogatives of the Head of the church, and upon her independence.

In Erastian establishments of religion it is admitted that the prerogatives of the Mediator and the spiritual independence of the church have been encroached on. Over such cases every friend of Zion should bewail; and all righteous means should be employed to reform them, or if incapable of reformation, to destroy them. But the assumption of spiritual power over the church by Erastian civil rulers is no part of a national provision for religion. As well might it be said that tyranny is part of the provision made for the national administration of justice. Sometimes civil rulers while furnishing the means of a national support for religion have assumed a power over the church in spiritual matters, and have most audaciously claimed to be visible heads of the church, and robbed her of her spiritual independence. Civil rulers have sometimes too, made the tribunals of justice engines of oppression. But does the establishment of a national judiciary necessarily include the idea of oppression by the executive? Nor does a national provision for religion necessarily involve Erastianism. That they have been sometimes associated, is no proof that they are inseparable. Let it even be admitted that they have never as yet been separated, which would be far from the truth, still this would not prove the necessary connexion between them. But we can not only conceive of their being distinct, we have at least one example of a national provision for religion where there were no Erastian encroachment on the head of the church, nor on her independence. The church during a former dispensation had a national provision but there was no union of church and state,—no

Erastian blending of civil and religious things together. Yet there was a friendly alliance constituted by divine authority. In spiritual matters the church was dependent only on her Head, the Lord Jesus Christ; her authority in these was absolutely independent of all civil power. The civil power had indeed a care respecting the church, but it was not a spiritual power. It was civil,—a power to protect the members of the church from external aggression in the enjoyment of their religious rights. This the church could not do for she has no civil authority. And it was a power of furnishing pecuniary means for maintaining the worship of God and supporting its ministers.

I plead not for a union of church and state, nor for a blending of them in any way, which the objection takes for granted as inseparable from a national provision for religion. But I hold it to be the duty of a nation without in any way interfering with spiritual matters, to provide for the worship of the true God.

VI. A national provision for the support of religion is necessary.

There is a vast difference between the felt necessity of temporal and spiritual things. The former are strongly and vividly, the latter are generally but inadequately felt. Men have in most instances sufficient stimulus to excite them to provide for their bodily wants; on the other hand, there is little or none to excite them to provide for their spiritual necessities. And often the very principles of our nature which excite attention to the former, become means of withdrawing the attention from the latter. The instinctive principles of self-pre-

servation urge man to seek food and raiment and suitable lodgings for his body, but these do not move him to use property if he has acquired it for the purpose of obtaining spiritual instruction for his mind, and for the convenient worship of the true God. Pride, vanity and ambition, all combine to excite men to strive for their indulgence and gratification. But at the same time they deaden the mind and tend to make it still more indifferent in respect of spiritual things. And even when conscience or fear are excited by the undefined anticipations of the future, which brood over the naturally corrupt minds of men, they always reject the truths of the gospel, and stay themselves on the deceitful props of superstition, so that false religion only is received. "Because" says the apostle, "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

To leave religion to be sought for, by the mere promptings of the sense of spiritual want, is to leave it to a principle which universal experience as well as the testimony of the spirit of God assures us can neither point out the thing needed, nor in the least induce to seek its enjoyments, but on the contrary repels and drives the natural mind farther away from it.

In these circumstances it is not to be expected that men will spontaneously provide for wants which they do not feel, and which, if either experience or the tes-

* Rom. viii. 7. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

timony of the spirit of God is relied on for information, they cannot feel: and that for the satisfactory reason they have no sense of such wants. In cities, as well as frequently in rural districts, but especially in the crowded population of the former, there are vast numbers who know as little and care as little for the worship of the true God; who have as little regard to spiritual happiness, present or future, as the untutored savage that roams through the desert, or the civilized, though on this subject equally ignorant and idolatrous Hindoo!—without God, and without hope in the world. Is it supposable, in despite of all experience, and of what is infinitely better authority, in despite of the voice of God speaking from heaven, that in such circumstances men will provide themselves with the means of religion? Can the tenants of the tomb join in sympathy with the grief of friends they have left behind? Can the Ethiopian change the color of his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may we expect that men sunk in ignorance and sin will spontaneously provide themselves with religious instruction! But not till then. The truth is, all who have given much attention to the subject know that it is remarkably difficult to keep up a sufficient interest in the minds even of the great bulk of professors of religion. The almost universal preference that is given to the wants of the body, to the spiritual wants of the soul; nay, that the means of ministering to luxury and mere animal indulgence is secured, while the support of the gospel occupies only a secondary place, that the latter is always made to yield to the former!

Is it Christian-like, is it even philosophical, with all these facts before us, to maintain that provision for religion may be safely left to the spontaneous demands of men, for the enjoyment of religious privileges like the demands for his bodily wants? It is useless, worse than useless, because it is deceptive, to reply to the argument by saying as is generally done, that the gospel forced its way into the nations and flourished for ages without any public provision, even in spite of national hostility, and broke down the barriers of idolatry; and what God has done he may and will do again. The comparison fails; the reply therefore is irrelevant. When the gospel was first promulged the nations were heathen; all national provision was of course out of the question till these nations were made acquainted with it, and taught to submit to its doctrines. Can it be sustained as a fair argument that because heathen nations did not make provision for the support of the gospel, nations enjoying the light of Christian truth ought not? Or is it fair to reason from what God did in an extraordinary case, that he will do the like in ordinary cases. Carry out the principle in its legitimate bearings, and its folly and falseness will at once become apparent. In the first ages of Christianity, its apostles and ministers were endowed with the supernatural power, of working miracles. The exercise of this power must have excited an attention to the truths of Christianity, and of course a corresponding anxiety on the part of those so excited, to enjoy its ministrations, that will in vain be looked for in the ordinary course of things.

The apostles were illiterate, but they received the gift of tongues; they were supernaturally and instantly taught a variety of languages. Is it reasonable to conclude from this that the ministers of religion ought still to be taken from among the illiterate; and confide on the gifts of tongues supernaturally communicated to qualify them for their labors?

God sent an angel and delivered Peter from prison; does any Christian now expect any such extraordinary interposition in his behalf? God sent his angel and signified to John the things that would be; does any Christian expect that God will make a revelation of the future to him as he did to John? Paul unhurt, cast from his hand the viper who had clung to it; Does any Christian expect from this that he may take up the deadly-biting serpent and not be hurt?

For a Christian to believe any of these things, is not faith but presumption. To argue then, from what God has done in extraordinary, that he will do so in ordinary circumstances, is unsupported by either faith or reason. The extraordinary effects of the gospel in the first ages, though produced irrespective of national support, does not warrant the conclusion that no such support ought now to be made.

Still more futile is it to reason from the state of religion in our own country that a national provision is unnecessary. The experiment has been tried and the result ought to satisfy every one that it is far from being successful. The religious instruction provided by the spontaneous liberality of the people bears no reasonable proportion to the religious wants of the community.

The religious statistics of the United States, compared with the entire population, demonstrates the truth of what I have now stated. The remarkable discrepancy which exists between the means of religious instruction and the population, has been endeavored to be accounted for, by the peculiar state of the country and the immense addition that is continually making to the population by emigration from other countries. This supposes one of two things; the absence of pecuniary means, or the absence of a gospel ministry equal to the extraordinary growth of the population. The first of these, I presume will not be said. Is it not the boast, and in some respects justly, of our nation, that her citizens are less taxed, her peasantry better fed and clothed, and in all respects externally the most comfortable in the world? The circumstances referred to, do not prevent the favorable results now mentioned. That new states thinly peopled are in some respects unfavorably situated, is admitted: Still however, as far as external things are concerned it is claimed, and perhaps truly, that the peasantry of the United States are more comfortable than those of almost any other country. This shows that it is not the want of means, but something else that produces the destitution of sufficient religious instruction. They have the means of increased external comforts; and were the desire of obtaining religious instruction equally strong, it would be equally within their reach. Nor can the destitution be charged upon an inadequate supply, of ministers of religion. For however inadequate the supply may be to the wants of the population, the supply is much greater than the demand. A large

number of the ministers of the gospel in the United States are without pastoral charge. One half, or nearly one half, for example, of the ministers of the General Assembly connexion are in this condition. The greater part of these being compelled to abandon their pastoral charges on account of inadequate means of support. And to this may be added the fact, that a vast number, not only of unsettled ministers but of those having charge of congregations are engaged as teachers in schools and academies. The gospel ministry is not in general adequately supported, and therefore frequently pastors of congregations as well as unsettled ministers are under the necessity of supporting themselves by teaching or otherwise. This shows that when the support of the gospel is left to the impulse of individual liberality it is vain to expect an adequate provision: it shows the absence of a felt necessity of religious instruction. To meet this indifference to religion, a public provision should be made for the support of the gospel.

2. Leaving the support of religion to the spontaneous liberality of a community, without any public provision, is obnoxious to very serious practical objections. It is not only true that religion as has been shown, will have only a very secondary consideration with even a large portion of professors, and with the great mass of society scarcely any consideration at all. This fact so extensively illustrated, sufficiently shows the necessity of some more permanent and secure provision.

I refer now particularly to the effects of depending entirely upon a spontaneous provision.

First, it must materially effect the independence of the ministers of the gospel. There are few men endowed with moral courage and piety enough to resist all temptation on this score. When a man knows or has strong reason to suspect that certain opinions may not be agreeable to many, or even to a very few influential individuals in his congregation, he is under temptation either to conceal or only partially urge such opinions publicly lest his pecuniary interests should suffer. The same reason may make him sinfully cautious in reproving the neglect of duty or censuring vice. I have known it given as a reason for ministerial neglect of a plain scriptural rule, that public opinion would not bear its application.

It is not necessary, nor do I refer for illustration of this point to unprincipled men, who may creep into the ministry of the gospel; such men will always seek their own temporal interests, and in most cases will be sure of attaining them by false and flattering practices, whatever safeguards may be thrown around the system. I refer to the temptation to which even good men are exposed by leaving them entirely dependent upon spontaneous liberality for their support. This kind of temptation is remarkably deceitful; it may materially affect a man's opinions and conduct without his being at all aware of it. It is in this secret and unacknowledged influence of the temptation that the great danger lies. No good man would for a moment allow himself to indulge the thought of accommodating his ministerial services to the prejudices or caprices of his congregation, whether in preaching the gospel or in

exercising government and discipline. This is of course altogether out of the question. But may not many do it without being aware of it? May not all so situated be influenced in some respects, while perhaps they may pique themselves upon their independence of thought and conduct? To deny such effects is to argue but little acquaintance with human character, and savours more of presumption than Christian wisdom and foresight. Such effects *may* not only result, but all probability is on the side that they *will* result from the plan of mere spontaneous provision for the support of the gospel. Is it Christian-like or is it proper to adopt a mode of supporting the gospel that must necessarily expose its ministers to so much temptation to betray the all important and spiritual interests of those committed to their pastoral charge? It is the dictate of sound policy as well as Christian morality to preserve by every proper safeguard the independence of important functionaries, to put and keep them beyond the reach of temptation as far as is possible. The value of this is readily acknowledged in civil society, in relation to the administration of justice. Hence in the state of New-York, the Chancellor and Justices of the Supreme Court, and in other states, those and inferior Judges hold their offices during good behaviour. They are thus rendered independent of mere popular feeling and prejudice.

Is it for the advantage of religion or the good of society that the ministers of the gospel are tempted to gratify the prejudices and caprices of those among whom they labor? An important part of their duty is to warn men of sin, to reprove and exhort with all long-

suffering. But if such reproofs give offence, as they must often do, is it proper that they whose official business it is to watch over the spiritual interests of others, should be tempted to neglect so important a duty. Ministers of religion would not be irresponsible for their conduct though they were rendered independent as to their pecuniary support. They are responsible for official misconduct to the ecclesiastical courts under which they are. And indeed this is the only responsibility that the case can admit of. To have the means of withholding pecuniary support forms no guaranty whatever to the people that duty will be properly performed. It may act as a temptation to flatter and gratify, but never as an inducement to duty.

SECTION VII.

THE DUTIES OF CITIZENS.

I. They owe obedience to the government.

The laws and regulations of a lawfully constituted government ought to be respected and obeyed. I do not mean however by this, that the subjects of law are under obligation to obey every enactment that those having power may choose to impose. I take it for granted in the remark which has been made that the government is not only rightfully constituted but also rightfully administered. I take it for granted that the laws requiring obedience are right and lawful. Otherwise they have no claim on the people; for claim arises out of the consideration that the thing commanded is in conformity to right. And this being determined the duty of citizens is obedience to law. It is not a blind submission to whatever may be called law. It is intelligent. It judges of the authority to command, and of the thing commanded; of the right which is possessed to command and of the conformity of the command to the principles of rectitude. For no human authority has a right to impose on the subjects of government any thing whatever, that is in opposition direct or implied to the revealed law of God. There is reserved then to the citizen the right of discriminating. Though it is to be observed that he must exercise this on his own respon-

sibility. His resistance to civil authority is not justifiable merely because he may think so; it must be tried by the law and the testimony.

1. Obedience is due to civil government because it is a divine institution. The obedience of which I speak is not given if there is a respect to it only as a human institution: if it is sustained and obeyed by citizens simply on the ground that it is their own. The principle of obedience is respect to it as a divine institution. That it has pleased God to appoint that men should not live like wild beasts, without government and without subordination, but that they should live in society; so should they do honor to his institution by cheerfully obeying lawful authority. And obeying it too from the principle of conscientious regard to a divinely instituted ordinance. "Not only for wrath but also for conscience sake."

2. Because obedience to the laws is necessary to the public welfare. The good of mankind is the immediate and direct end of civil society. Every violation of order or disregard to righteous authority is a direct assault upon the welfare of society, and its obvious tendency is to break up civil order and introduce anarchy and confusion. While regard is to be had to the institution as from God, regard is also to be had to the end which God had in view.

II. Civil government should be supported.

The civil ruler is entitled to remuneration for his services. It does not lie in the way of my present inquiry to ascertain on mere political grounds the advantages

or disadvantages of remunerating all who are employed in the respective branches of government, as well legislative as executive and judicial. I proceed on the ground of scriptural equity, that those who serve the community have a right to be supported by the community.

Not only have the officers of government a right to be supported but the government itself needs to be supported; and it is the duty of a people to furnish the means by which the government may be sustained. "For this cause pay you tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually on this very thing."* I have a reference however not so much to the furnishing of the means of carrying on the government, as to the principle from which it flows. Every government constituted on principles of representation will have provided by its constitution for the means of carrying it on. It is the will of God expressed in scripture that those who enjoy the advantages of government should cheerfully furnish the support required. As the scripture requires conscientious obedience to law, it requires also conscientious support of the government. The constitution or the law will have empowered the compulsion of paying taxes, but submitting to such compulsion is not fulfilling the obligation imposed on citizens by divine appointment. In this matter they "must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."†

III. Those who bear civil rule are entitled to honor and respect. I speak not of that blind admiration ap-

* Rom. xiii. 6. † Rom. xiii. 5.

proaching to awe which the tyrants of the earth have exacted from their servile subjects, on the ground of divine hereditary-right or otherwise. This is as far removed from the honor and respect required by scripture as it is subversive of independence and freedom of thought.

It is the will of God that civil rulers should be held in honor and respect. "Render fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" is due.* "Fear God; honor the king. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."† The honor thus commanded to be given to the "king" is due on the same principle to every chief magistrate, whether known by this or any other name. The honor is due, not to the man but to the officer; and that not as known by any mere political distinction, but as possessed of lawful civil power. For while the scriptures do not determine the particular form, it determines the character of civil government; and wherever this character is possessed there is lawful power, whether the form may be republican or kingly. It is the character, and not the form of government that decides whether the power is or is not of a moral scriptural kind. The honor then is due to a lawful magistrate, whether known by the names, governor, president, or king. It is due however not only to those who bear chief authority in a state, but to subordinate magistrates in their respective places. The obligation to honor and respect civil rulers flows from the divine command: they are entitled to honor because they are his ministers.

* Rom. xiii. 7. † 1 Pet. ii. 17, 15.

The ordaining of honor to civil rulers bears all the marks of divine wisdom and goodness. Obedience in this respect is as much for the advantage of the community at large as it is their duty. A despised government can never be advantageous to the people. There must be confidence in civil rulers on the part of the people, before they can successfully undertake to conduct public affairs so as to promote public interests on any thing like an enlarged and beneficial plan. But there can be no confidence whatever without respect or honor. This is a matter of far more vital importance to the welfare of a community than is commonly understood. Every man who values his country's prosperity should be cautious of saying or doing any thing calculated to bring disrespect upon those who conduct its civil concerns; the Christian will especially be cautious of doing any thing that may discredit a divine institution.

IV. Civil rulers should be prayed for. "I exhort therefore," says the apostle "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings and for all that are in authority."* Called to the performance of very important duties, in which the welfare of the community both civil and religious is vitally interested, they need wisdom to direct them in their counsels and actions. But the wisdom necessary for the attainment of legislative, judicial, or executive righteousness in a nation, like every other kind of wisdom, comes down from the "Father of lights." Prayer is the way by which it is

* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

to be sought and obtained. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* The command of God makes it a duty to pray for civil rulers, and the advantage to be reaped from it should prove an incitement to discharge it. "That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." †

V. Citizens should remonstrate with civil rulers when they do wrong. I speak not now of the right of petition, which every citizen possesses, which cannot be denied without a violation of the principles of justice and equity. I speak of a *duty* which they *ought* to perform; not of something they may claim as a right, but something they are bound to do as a duty. Even good and wise men may, in the performance of official as well as private duties, do far wrong. It is a duty which in such instances citizens owe to civil rulers to remonstrate discreetly, and in a becoming manner with them. Nor is this inconsistent with another duty already specified, that of honoring and respecting civil rulers.

* James i. 6.

† 1 Tim. ii. 2.

SECTION VIII.

THE RELATION OF DISSENT FROM AN IMMORAL
CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

It has been taken for granted in the remarks made in the preceding section, that the government to which the duties specified are due is not any government simply existing in the providence of God. For it is alike opposed to reason as to scripture to imagine that every civil government constituted by men possesses the character that gives a government all its claim to conscientious obedience and support as the moral ordinance of God. The mere fact of existence does nothing in determining the question whether a government is conformed to the preceptive will of God, which is the only claim that gives a right to the conscientious acknowledgment of a Christian people. The existence is one thing and its character is another, but it is the character that determines the claim.

To withhold allegiance from a government that is not the moral ordinance of God, is so far from being wrong that it is a duty which Christians owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. A government is immoral, in the constitution of which there is no acknowledgment of God, the Ruler of the universe; nor the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth; nor the obligation of the scriptures as the supreme rule in civil things. A government is immoral, the constitution and laws of which contain unjust and inequitable principles. Finally, a

government is immoral that neglects to secure the end for which magistracy is instituted; namely, the glory of God in the happiness of men; protecting them in their rights, executing justice, promoting morality, and encouraging education and religion.

“Civil society is a *voluntary association*; the nation is not bound to admit to all its peculiar privileges every person who may reside within the reach of its power, nor is every person dwelling within the limits of a nation under obligation to incorporate with the national society. Every government has the right of making laws of naturalization, and every individual possesses the right of expatriation, and both these rights are to be exercised in conformity to the law of God, the Supreme Ruler and Judge.”*

Christians are not bound, therefore to incorporate themselves with a state, where such immorality exists, though they may be geographically within its jurisdiction. Yet it is their duty for the sake of peace and order “to conform to the common regulations of society in things lawful; but to profess allegiance to no constitution of government which is in hostility to the kingdom of Christ, the Head of the church and the Prince of the kings of the earth.” While thus endeavoring “to further the true end of civil government, the maintenance of peace and quietness in all godliness and honesty, they have a right to protection in their lives, liberties and property.”† It is the duty of Christians to abstain from association with, and to testify against immoral governments.

* Reformation Principles, pp. 119, 120.

† Ref. Prin. pp. 120, 121.

1. By abstaining from oaths of allegiance. An oath of allegiance is a direct recognition of the constitution sworn to, and involves the swearer in the guilt of its immorality—the guilt of swearing to maintain an immorality! Nor is the sin lessened by any consideration arising from the fact that the constitution may contain provisions for its own future amendment. Because when the oath of allegiance is taken, it is to the constitution as it *is*, and not to what it *may* be.

2. By refusing to hold office, one qualification of which is an acknowledgment of the constitution directly, or implied. To hold civil office is not wrong, and cannot be inconsistent with the Christian character; for civil government is the ordinance of God. The Christian character is not too holy to be engaged in civil transactions, nor are they too profane for his character. But civil office may be suspended on terms direct or implied, that are inconsistent with his character, and obligations as a Christian, and as a witness for the testimony of Jesus. The objection to civil office, then, is not on any abstract ground relating to civil government, but is determined by the character of the particular government objected to. The ordinance itself is entitled to every respect on the part of the Christian, because it is a divine institution, but immoral principles or radical defects in the constitution invalidate the claim of a particular government. Such are not an exemplification of the moral ordinance of God, and therefore have no claim upon that acknowledgment which is due to his institution.

3. By abstaining from the exercise of the right of suf-

frage. The elective franchise is, in a representative system of government a right of great importance, and intimately connected with the best interests of a commonwealth. The discharge of this duty with fidelity may promote the welfare of a country, or improperly exercised, it may materially injure it. Considered as the right of a citizen, it is one of great magnitude and value. When exercised the Christian ought always to feel himself bound to act on Christian principle: and never to elevate by his suffrage to a place of power and trust an unworthy individual. The character given in scripture of civil rulers, furnishes the test by which he ought to try every candidate for office—"men that fear God." An irreligious man, whatever may be his talents and acquirements, can never in the administration of office be a blessing to the commonwealth. I am far from undervaluing high mental qualification for civil office, whether original or acquired; but they are of comparatively less importance than moral and religious qualifications. Honesty and uprightness of purpose, directed by the ennobling principle of "fear of God and love to man," will produce efforts of patriotism and self denial, that talented but ungodly men cannot even imagine; and will achieve for their country a prosperity permanent as it is pure, which is utterly beyond the reach of intellectual attainment, apart from moral and religious principle. But there is another question which the Christian ought to settle before he exercises the right of suffrage. Can he consistently exercise the right in the given case? The right is conceded to him as a citizen; but as a Christian can he consistently exercise

it, where the government is immoral, where there is not an exemplification of the ordinance of God for good to man?

Every reason that satisfies him that he ought not in such circumstances to hold office, ought to satisfy him at the same time that he should not use the elective franchise to choose another as his representative, to do what he judges inconsistent with his own Christian character to do. There is a oneness existing between the representative and those who are represented, that makes in a certain sense the actions of the former that of the latter; and the oath of office he swears as their representative; the constitution he recognizes in this oath, he recognizes as their representative; the acts which he performs, whether legislative, judicial or executive, he performs as their representative. His official actings are theirs, done through his official agency.

It is a settled principle in morals, that a man may not ask or appoint another to do for him what he knows or believes to be improper. If wrong for himself to have done, it is wrong to ask another to do it for him.

It is evidently the will of God, that the great moral revolution which is to take place among the nations, shall be effected by the testimony of the witnesses of Christ. But it is a testimony sustained by a consistent practice, a practice illustrative of general holiness, and a faithful application of the doctrines which it contains. No testimony, however orthodox or pure, will obtain the blessing of God, that is not supported by consistency, of conduct. It was this that recommended the testimony of Elijah and proved the means of restraining for a

time, the idolatry of the Israelites. It was this practical consistency of James Renwick and the few other faithful witnesses associated with him, that was blessed by the Head of the church as the means of overturning one of the most cruel governments that ever oppressed a civilized people. Though holding generally the same principles with this noble martyr, the great part of the nation truckled and wavered in their practice, while he continued stedfast and consistent, maintaining a testimony as well by his practice as by the principles which he held, till the power of the persecutor was broken, and the throne of the Stuarts tottered on its base!

